MOUNT ST. VINCENT
SERIES

MOTHER ELIZABETH BOYLE

FIRST SUPERIORESS OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY, MOUNT ST. VINCENT, NEW YORK.

ACH 14
12.50

The Catholic
Theological Union
LIBRARY
Chicago, Ill.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011 with funding from
CARLI: Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois

http://www.archive.org/details/lifeofmothereliz00ammg

The Catholic
Theological Union
LIBRARY
Chicago, Ill.

MOTHER ELIZABETH.

LIFE

OF

MOTHER ELIZABETH BOYLE,

ONE OF

MOTHER SETON'S

FIRST COMPANIONS, THE ASSISTANT MOTHER UNDER HER FOR EIGHT YEARS, AND FIRST SUPERIORESS OF

"THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL,"

IN NEW YORK CITY.

BY

A. M. M. G.

EDITED BY THE

REV. JAMES J. DOUGHERTY.

PRESS OF THE
MISSION OF THE IMMACULATE VIRGIN
Mount Loretto, Staten Island, N. Y.

1893.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1893, by

"THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF ST.
VINCENT DE PAUL,"

in the office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

In presenting to the public this life of Mother Elizabeth Boyle, we beg the reader to view it as rather a religious reading than a literary production. It was originally intended for private circulation, as a means among the sisters, by which the simple facts of the simple life of the first superioress of the Sisters of Charity of New York might be preserved as the primary links in the chain of the history of the Community. It was also hoped, that by it the prudent charity of St. Vincent de Paul and the zealous gentleness of Mother Seton would be more fully developed among their daughters. It was written by a sister for the sisters. In it, the author has shown her love of that virtue so dear to every true Sister of Charity, and so earnestly recommended by her Rule—Simplicity. She has thrown aside all aspirations to literary style, that she might inculcate by her writings that virtue which was so conspicuous to all, save herself, in her own life. Through all the years

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1893, by

"THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF ST.
VINCENT DE PAUL,"

in the office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

In presenting to the public this life of Mother Elizabeth Boyle, we beg the reader to view it as rather a religious reading than a literary production. It was originally intended for private circulation, as a means among the sisters, by which the simple facts of the simple life of the first superioress of the Sisters of Charity of New York might be preserved as the primary links in the chain of the history of the Community. It was also hoped, that by it the prudent charity of St. Vincent de Paul and the zealous gentleness of Mother Seton would be more fully developed among their daughters. It was written by a sister for the sisters. In it, the author has shown her love of that virtue so dear to every true Sister of Charity, and so earnestly recommended by her Rule—Simplicity. She has thrown aside all aspirations to literary style, that she might inculcate by her writings that virtue which was so conspicuous to all, save herself, in her own life. Through all the years

of her religious life, Mother Elizabeth was as simple as a child. Hence, it was befitting that this "Sketch," as it was first called, should be simple and plain.

It is in response to the frequently expressed wishes of the many friends of the Community of Mount St. Vincent, to whom the traditions of Mother Elizabeth have become familiar, that it has been resolved to give to the public the evidences of her saintly life. We are satisfied that this decision will give pleasure to many. We think there are many pious people in the world, who will be encouraged in their endeavor to ascend the Mountain of the Lord by the study of this book. We know that there are trembling souls, who desire, yet fear to offer themselves to Jesus Christ, that they become his Spouses forever. These will be strengthened in their holy resolves by the study of the trials and hardships which Mother Elizabeth bore with such sweet patience and saintly courage.

From the day on which she entered Religion till the hour of her death, the life of Mother Elizabeth was one continued act of self-sacri-

fice and devotion to the duties assigned her. As a novice, a professed sister, and later the Superior of the Community, she was ever the same quiet, unassuming character, hiding under her sister's habit talents the most remarkable, and the most noble virtues. The days in which with motherly love she watched over the orphans, and the years in which she directed that youthful Community which now forms the glory of New York, were times, which tried the souls of the Catholics of the States, times in which were needed the zeal of the missionary, the patience of the martyr, and the perseverance of the apostle.

Many, still living, can remember the arduous struggles of the saintly Archbishop Hughes to obtain bread for his orphans, and his noble defense of both sisters and children against the lawless force of Know-nothing mobs. Amid all these stirring scenes, the simple Mother Elizabeth possessed her soul in gentle peace, leaving all things in the hands of Providence. Nor was her confidence misplaced. From the few sisters who clustered around her, as they held their first election in the chapel of the Prince Street Asylum,

the Community has now grown to a sisterhood composed of a thousand members, directing over a hundred establishments. Though blessed in numbers, it has been doubly blessed in that the same gentle spirit still prevails in the Community, the same simplicity marks the lives, and the same holy zeal inspires the actions of the Sisters.

We trust that this simple volume will help towards the preservation of these virtues among her Sisters, and aid in their spread beyond the convent walls; and in presenting it to the reader as the Life of Mother Elizabeth, we put it forward, also, as a teacher of the principles of the life of the TRUE SISTER OF CHARITY.

J. J. D.

NEW YORK, May 15, 1893.

INTRODUCTION.

One may ask: "Who was Mother Elizabeth Boyle?"

Who was she? Not a genius, in the common acceptation of the term,—not a leader in society,—not a shining figure in the world of fashion. Why, then, should her life be worth putting into print?

Her life is well worth this, for, although quiet, retiring, and singularly reticent about herself and her actions, she was, nevertheless, a true heroine! A valiant leader of that countless army, who fight the Prince of darkness, under the banner of the Cross. She was a shining light, showing the way to our heavenly country, and enlightening the many who drew near her, and who sought to shun the rocks and whirlpools of this sea of life.

Mother Elizabeth Boyle was, a simple Sister of Charity.

In this little sketch of her life, the reader will

see brought into daily practice the maxims of our Divine Lord. As the musician, who plays an instrument, brings out the music already existing in the air, so, one, who practises the Divine law, shows forth the beauty of holiness. The reader, therefore, is certain of finding mental vigor and encouragement in perusing this recital of heroic endurance and self-annihilation.

Where is the truly Catholic heart that does not exult at the very name of Sister of Charity? Not on account of the individual, but because of the principles which she carries out in her life. A Sister of Charity, and God is Charity! A Sister to all who are in any affliction of mind or body—to the poor soldier wounded on the battle field; to the victim of disease tossing on his bed of pain, to the prisoner under the dire sentence of death for his crimes! The annals of the prisons can relate that the hardened criminal has yielded to the gentle sway of the Sister. He has given into her hands the poison, and the pistol, with which he was bent on self-destruction. He has done this, even when he had resolved in his heart to murder whoever would have the hardihood to approach him. Yielding

to the impulses awakened in his heart by her kindly piety, he turned to God, and died a penitent, like many of his unfortunate fellows. The Sister of Charity is, a Sister to the plague-stricken, and the galley slave. Above all, and especially in this country, she is an angel to the poor unfortunate children of ignorance, or, what is worse, to the victims of *false teaching*. Parents are too often negligent, and children grow up in such ignorance of God as brutalizes the human form divine. Then it is, that the Sister of Charity steps in, to save from worse than death, by gently instilling into the youthful mind the knowledge that leads to God and Heaven.

This is no exaggerated effusion. Experience has too often proved that in this large City, with all its opportunities for good, souls pass into eternity, without having ever been taught the dreadful realities that there await them.

This volume treats of the life of our first New York Mother, a Sister of Charity, who spent all her energies in saving the young, teaching them by word and example to shun the snares, so thickly strewn in the way of light-hearted boy-

hood. Had a proper sketch been compiled years ago, the sisters, who had been Mother's first and life-long companions, might have furnished many details of edification to the reader, more especially to the younger members of the Community. As these have not been obliged to undergo the hardships, privations, and labors of our first sisters, they may have but little idea of their real lives. Their lives were one long sacrifice, and their virtues have drawn the blessing of God on our Community. Yes, the dear old sisters have left us the result of their hard toil. May we never think of them without an aspiration of praise to God for His gifts to them, and a petition for grace to follow the example of their unswerving devotion to their calling.

A sister's life, however, although before the world, is intended to be shielded from observation. To use the words of a writer. The sister is intended: "to live the poem that another sings."

In the early days of our Community, when our Mother Elizabeth so beautifully transferred the life of our Lord to her own every-day practice,—

there was no time to write lives, nor even to think of how these generous souls lived and suffered. Every one had to "put her shoulder to the wheel," and go ahead, trusting in Him, Who gave a promise with the command: "Cast thy care on the Lord, and He will sustain Thee."

To a priest who had petitioned for the reception of a postulant, Mother Elizabeth once wrote: "I hope the young lady is aware that ours is a life of labor." That sentence gives the keynote of her life. To work for God in the persons of the poor, especially the orphans, seemed the sole aim of her life.

When Sister-Servant at the boys' asylum, and quite advanced in years, Mother made all the clothing, consisting of coats, vests, and pants, for the children, numbering at that time three hundred and eighty. There were no machines in those days to speed the busy fingers. With three girls, whom she hired to help with the sewing, Mother not only made, but cut out all the new material which she had purchased. She was Sister-Servant, and obliged by this duty to see to each and all of the inmates of the house. Never-

theless, in addition to the sewing, she kept the altar and all its belongings under her special care, and every day her personal supervision was scrupulously bestowed on the chapel.

To some it may seem a simple exaggeration to affirm, that not an hour of her long life could be pointed out as wanting in edification. The unanimous verdict of all who lived with her, confirms the saying of a sister who not long since, stated: "Oh, there is no fear of exaggeration, when speaking of the virtues of Mother Elizabeth! I never saw her do any thing, never heard her say any thing, not in keeping with our holy Rule. She was the first at every exercise, until attacked by the malady that finally carried her to her grave. Mild and gentle, as every one knew Mother to be, she could, when duty required, call us, young sisters to account, and tell us in very plain terms, whatever she remarked as faulty in our conduct."

One of the boys for whom Mother Elizabeth has cared, the Rev. Michael J. Madden of Morristown, has been of no little assistance to us, in collecting the materials for this life.

"Shortly after Mother died," he writes, "I

was requested to prepare a sketch of her life for the *Freeman's Journal*, and had gathered a number of facts when that Journal was suppressed. When I heard that you proposed to write her life, I determined to send you my papers. I have exalted ideas of Mother's character, and of the peculiar virtues that gained her the esteem and affection of all who knew her, and if my note, help to perpetuate her memory I shall rejoice, or, to her, under God I owe the great privilege of being a priest in the church of God."

This Father Madden it was, who said to a brother priest standing by Mother's grave: "A son need not be ashamed to be seen weeping for his mother."

If this Memoir be deemed worthy of print, the notes furnished by this good priest, will serve to perpetuate the memory of her, whom he regarded as his mother, and thus, his filial piety will be rewarded.

The letters of Father Moranvillé, Mother's director, furnished also by Father Madden, give an insight into the early life of our Mother which is truly edifying, and which from her retir-

ing disposition and strict reticence about herself, we should never otherwise have gained.

Saint Vincent often said to the sisters of his time, that God alone was the founder of the community, or of the little company, as he used to call it. The reason he gave for this saying was, that no one thought of it until the thing was accomplished. "I did not think of it," he used to say, "nor did Mr. Portail" (St. Vincent's fellow-laborer), "nor did Mademoiselle LeGras."

Yet the Community was formed, springing up of its own accord, as it were, around them.

Surely, we may say the same of the New York Community! When Mother Elizabeth first entered on her duties in the great metropolis, she little dreamed that a new and flourishing community was to spring up and spread and grow, till it would become a veritable mustard tree, with its branches shooting into almost every parish of the great archdiocese of New York, and beyond these confines, into many other dioceses of our country.

In seeking the secret of this great success, we find ourselves going back to the foundations of this great building, which the Lord hath

made. What do we discover in these foundation stones? *Everywhere*, poverty, labor, humility, obedience. Our first Superior, the illustrious Bishop Hughes, in his conferences during the first retreat, exhorts the sisters to cherish their poverty, to glory in their want of convenience. Truly they had every facility for so doing.

It is of Mother Elizabeth we write, and a life, such as hers deserves to be written in letters of gold. Better still, we know that her name is inscribed in the Book of Life. We say with the Psalmist: "*In Memoria aeterna erit Justus.*"

LIFE

OF

MOTHER ELIZABETH BOYLE.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory Remarks—Birth of Elizabeth—Her Parentage—Early Life—Conversion to the True Faith.

"WHILE the world is busy paying homage to its heroes, praising and flattering them while living, and, at their dying, rearing monuments to perpetuate their fame, many holy persons die in the bosom of the Catholic Church, who, in a quiet and unostentatious way, have done more for the welfare of mankind, and for the greater honor and glory of God's Holy Name than all those to whose memory these worldly votaries erect so many costly monuments. It is true there is a vast difference between the motives which actuate those who serve the world, and those who serve God. The followers

of the world, who are laboring to reach the goal of earthly glory, though they may profess to be influenced by disinterested motives, have nothing to preserve them from the weakness incident to human nature. Hence is it that ambition and desire of fame have more to do with their actions, than a pure desire to contribute to the welfare of the human race. Therefore, the great men of the world, its statesmen, its heroes, and its philanthropists, look for their reward on earth, and, as this reward is in proportion to their notoriety, they use every available means to make themselves known far and wide. Even when some persons, possessed of nobler impulses, wish to engage in philanthrophic undertakings quietly and unostentatiously, it is almost impossible for them to escape the fame, the praises of the world imparts to their actions, since they rarely succeed in screening themselves from its gaze. Therefore, they generally become sooner or later, so dazzled as to grasp at its perishable renown. Thus the world can scarcely form a conception of that exalted virtue, which delights in doing hidden works of beneficence, and hence it almost ignores the fact, that there are thousands in the bosom of the Catholic Church, who are toiling away their lives for

the good of their fellow men, without ever thinking of receiving a reward in this life. Religion teaches its members that it is better that the angels of God should record their good deeds in the Book of Life, than that they should be praised by men on earth. Hence, they labor not for rewards, for honor, or for fame; they wish to remain unknown, and are most happy, when, ignored by the world, they can do good by stealth. This is eminently the case with members of those religious orders in the Catholic Church, devoted to the duties of christian charity. Wherever the Catholic Church gains a footing, she shows herself at once solicitous to erect hospitals, orphan asylums, homes for the insane, for the deaf and the dumb, etc., so that, all of her children, however afflicted by the hand of Providence, may receive those comforts which religion loves to lavish upon the unfortunate. Owing to the zeal of those holy prelates whom God has placed over us, such institutions have arisen in our city, and, after a while, no doubt, however heavily one may be afflicted, he will find that Catholic charity and benevolence, have provided a home for him.

For more than half a century, the Sisters of Charity have been in our midst, devoting them-

selves to the cause of charity in all its branches. True to their mission, they have never faltered in the performance of the sacred duties of their charge, and, in times of sickness, of poverty, and of comfort, they have been steadily devoted to the welfare of our citizens. They were called to this city, to assume the care of the Orphan Asylums in 1817, and since that time, these good Sisters have been thoroughly identified with the cause of the orphan. Few of our citizens remain, who witnessed their early labors. It is true, they sought not earthly renown, but strove to work silently and unknown, well persuaded; that our Lord had a treasure in Heaven in reserve for them. We would wish, however, to save from oblivion, the memory of one whose life was spent under the humble garb of these Sisters of Charity, and who, for nearly forty years, was identified with the cause of the New York orphans. We allude to the subject of our present memoir, Mother Elizabeth Boyle. Mother Elizabeth was born in Cecil County, Maryland, October 16, 1790. Her father's family * and the Lancasters, her Mother's, were of English, even noble origin."

---

* The Boyles, her Father's family, no doubt, had passed over into England from Ireland.

We have made no efforts to search into this matter; "True goodness, is true greatness." In our estimation, however, no one, who ever had the happiness of seeing the revered Mother Elizabeth, would find any difficulty in believing that she had sprung from the noblest family. Her parents were protestants, probably Episcopalians. While she was still very young, a catholic priest came to say Mass near her father's residence. Mr. and Mrs. Boyle rode over to the place to see so mighty a wonder as a priest celebrating Mass. Elizabeth went with two young ladies, who had promised to take good care of her. She arrived too late, the people were dispersing, and as many protestants had congregated, the curiosity of the youthful Elizabeth was excited by hearing them talk of the lighted candles that had been used at the service; she wondered much why lighted candles were required at Mass. About this time, an Irish gentleman frequently called at her father's house, and entertained the family by telling them many strange stories about the catholic religion. He gave out, that he had left Ireland to avoid making the stations. We may reasonably conclude that his stories were so many falsehoods. Elizabeth listened to him with the closest attention, and frequently de-

clared that she would prefer to be anything rather than a catholic.

An excellent catholic lady and her daughter, spent some time on a visit at her house, but Elizabeth imbibed no catholic ideas. Some years after, her family took into their service, an old black woman, as cook. She was a good catholic, and Elizabeth frequently saw her engaged saying her prayers, even while busied over the range. The other servants used to delight in teasing the old woman about her beads, etc. Once, a negro succeeded in finding the beads which the old cook had hidden in the cellar, for greater security. Elizabeth remarked the old woman's distress of mind although she was ignorant of its cause. As she had a most tender heart, she could not endure to see the tears of this poor servant. She asked the cause of her sadness. The poor negress owned her loss, and, at the same time, told Elizabeth that she suspected the young negro who served in the kitchen, of having taken the beads, as she saw him watching her when she put them away. Elizabeth hastened to the kitchen yard, where she saw the luckless thief playing with his prize. She ordered him to confide them to her, threatening him with her father's displeasure. This little incident made these beads an object of interest

in Elizabeth's eyes, particularly, as the poor negress showed such unbounded joy at regaining them. No doubt, many fervent Hail Marys were silently offered for her young mistress, by the grateful black. Time wore on,—Elizabeth felt a yearning in her soul to know more of God, and to be more intimately united to Him. She asked the poor negress one day to teach her how to say her beads. After some hesitation, it seems she did so, for Mother Elizabeth used to say: "I knew how to say my beads, and the acts of faith, hope, and charity, before I became a catholic." She attended Mass several times, without receiving any seeming impression. On one occasion, she and another young protestant lady behaved disrespectfully during Mass, but she was conscious of her fault, for she told her mother how she had acted, and received a severe reprimand. When she was about sixteen, she formed an intimacy with a young lady who was a methodist. Her new friend and herself agreed to set out on a certain Sunday, to visit the different churches in Baltimore, and to become members of the one they should like best. God in His Providence permitted, that Elizabeth should be taken seriously ill on the Saturday previous to the Sunday appointed, and as soon as she was sufficiently recovered

she was sent home to the country. After her perfect restoration to health, she became acquainted with some catholics on whose invitation she, occasionally, went to church. Yet she remained without any intention or desire to acquire a knowledge of the Faith. The catholics in the little settlement where she resided attended a small church in that quarter of Baltimore, called Apple Alley. As there were only plain benches for their accommodation, Elizabeth was able to read a little, steathily as it were, from the prayer books used by persons near her, and she was much pleased with all she could make out. Some one chanced to give her a catechism to read; she perused it, and was pleased with its contents, but, having read it once, laid it aside. Yet, before long, she took it up again, and began to reflect seriously upon its contents. On Palm Sunday, she accompanied an elderly catholic lady to Mass. On seeing the priest distributing the palms to the people, at the sanctuary railing, she felt a strong desire to go up and get some. She asked her friend if she might and was told, yes; but Elizabeth thought that she had been refused. A feeling as if she were unworthy to receive the blessed palm from the hands of the priest came over her.

Time rolled on, but grace was silently working in the heart of Elizabeth. One day, she was walking with the young methodist friend mentioned above. As they were conversing freely, Elizabeth took advantage of the occasion to tell her, that she had made up her mind to become a catholic. Her friend appeared very much shocked at this, and after pausing for a moment, looked Elizabeth sternly in the face, saying: "What, become a member of *that* Church!" She went on making her severe reproaches for some time. Their friendship was at an end. Some time afterwards, and when Elizabeth was entering her seventeenth year, she was introduced to the Rev. Father Moranvillé, venerable both for his age and great virtues. From time to time, she still attended the catholic church. Her mind was, however, much disturbed, from the knowledge that her mother and best friends were bitter in their feelings against the Church. Besides, she feared much, she would not prove faithful to the obligations she would assume by embracing the catholic religion, and would thereby, have more to answer for on the great accounting day. Reflections of this nature, filled her mind with great uneasiness. One Sunday she set out by herself, to go to a church, she was

undecided, as to which. As she came to the corner of the street, leading to the methodist church, she thought; "I may as well go, where I have so often been." But grace was now to effect its final triumph. "O miserable creature, that you are," said she to herself, "after you have just caught a glimpse of the true light, will you shut your eyes to it?" "And," said she, to use her own words still: "I turned around, and went straight to the catholic church, and by God's grace, never afterwards went to any other."

A Catholic lady whom she made her confidant most willingly took it upon herself to procure all that was necessary for her baptism. Elizabeth did not communicate her intention to her mother, but her frequent visits to catholics and her attendance at the catholic church had excited Mrs. Boyle's suspicions. Providence so ordered it that she herself went to the catholic church accompanied by a younger sister of Elizabeth on the very morning that the baptism was to take place. We may judge of her surprise, when she saw her beloved daughter arrayed in snowy white approach the baptismal font. In this way, she became a witness of the impressive rites made use of by the Holy Church, on receiving persons into her bosom.

She saw the cleansing waters flow down upon her daughter's brow, rendering her soul more spotless and beautiful in the eyes of God, and His angels, than was the white robe she wore. A few moving remarks were no doubt made, by the happy Father Moranvillê, and then, the still astonished mother, saw her child return from the font bearing a crown of beautiful flowers upon her brow, meet emblem of the spiritual adoption by the Eternal Father by which she had acquired a title to a heavenly crown. Elizabeth, unconscious that her mother's eye was resting upon her, was too much absorbed in her devotions, to notice aught around her—Mass was ended. Elizabeth's young, pure heart had renewed its baptismal vows at the moment, when Jesus, as a Victim of Propitiation between her soul and His Heavenly Father, was elevated in the hands of His priest, to receive the homages of His grateful creatures. Jesus, who had that morning been made the King and Master of her soul, cast upon her, His benign eyes of mercy, and whispered to her heart; "Elizabeth," I have loved thee with an eternal love, therefore have I called thee!" O! with what generosity did she respond to that call! Thus brought into the true fold by con-

viction, how pleasing must her thanksgivings, her adorations, her praises, have been to her Saviour and her God!

As she was going from the church, she was accosted by her mother and sister, who had been in mute astonishment during the whole service. It was too late for her mother to reprove. The only trouble of that mother's heart now was, lest her dear child should go to religion, and thus, consummate in her estimation, her total isolation from her family. "Coming events cast their shadows before," the poet tells us; it may be that the halo of sacrifice about the brow of her child, made that mother's heart thus true in its misgivings. How could it be otherwise than that the dazzling beauty of her dear daughter's soul, revealing itself in that peerless beauty which grace lends on such occasions even to those of quiet and ordinary appearance, should have whispered of yet more heroic sacrifices! Yes, all the beauty of the christian soul, being derived from the great sacrifice of the Cross, its seems as if every sacrifice made by creatures portends a still greater. The mother's natural, instinctive feeling was true—Nature worshipping the God of sacrifice looked up in horror, to see if more were required. No angel came to say to her bleeding

heart that God was satisfied. No, the sacrifice which the youthful Elizabeth was about to offer was too agreeable to God, and too meritorious to the creature, to be dispensed with, and Oh! what an honor ought any parent to esteem it to give her daughter to her God and Creator, rather than to a creature, weak and miserable as herself!

CHAPTER II.

Her First Communion—Happy Effects of a Worthy First Communion—She Resolves to Enter Religion—Arrives at St. Joseph's.

SHORTLY after her conversion, Father Moranvillé gave a retreat to the children of his parish, who were preparing to make their first communion. Elizabeth followed faithfully every exercise of the retreat. Her soul became hourly more and more fortified by grace so that she obtained from God so eminent a command over her naturally hasty temper, that from the happy day of her first communion, she never yielded to passion. That this is true, may be gleaned from the following fact. Many years later, a young sister chanced to remark that "Mother" naturally must have had a quick temper, if one might judge from the subdued sparkle in her eyes. Sister Veronica, who had been forty-three or forty-four years in her community and in daily intercourse with Mother Elizabeth, replied in a surprised tone: "No, I never saw the slightest indication of it." Later on Mother's secret was learned from an orphan child, whom she had prepared for her

first communion. In one of her instructions, she had said to her: "My dear child, you must not yield to passion, after your first communion. I had a quick temper naturally, I used sometimes to let my sister feel the effects of my anger while going and coming home from school, but since I made my first communion, I have never yielded to passion." It is remarked by a holy French priest who has written beautiful instructions on first communion, that our Lord seems to anticipate the general judgment, in a manner, on the day of the first communion. Indeed, how true it is, if that most exalted act be well performed, virtues seem to spring up in youthful hearts, so that such happy children, are no longer as tender plants, but, already begin to bloom in the bosom of our Holy Mother the Church, spreading around them the fragrance of every virtue. Oh! if more care were taken with the first communion, we would have many souls as pure and pleasing to God as was the soul of a St. Agnes, a St. Cecilia, or a St. Catharine! Fortunately for Elizabeth, she found in the worthy pastor of St. Patrick's Church,* a spiritual father most anxious to secure the grace

---

*Rev. John Francis Moranvillé was at that time Pastor of St. Patrick's Church in Baltimore. This holy man, so well known in Baltimore, and so beautifully eulogized by the pen of the late Bishop

of a worthy first communion for all the lambkins of his flock.

Happy, thrice happy day, was that of Elizabeth's first communion! She received that Jesus into her pure heart who had drawn her in the sweetness of his ointments!

If one communion would suffice to make saints of those bringing perfect contrition and a good will to the sacred banquet, how comparatively easy should it be, for the newly baptized, and for children, to be excited to those holy sentiments necessary to produce this effect,

---

Bruté, and by the author of "Desultory Sketches of the Catholic Church in Maryland," was educated at the French seminary du St. Esprit, by Fathers who brought to their noble work talents of the highest order, combined with profound wisdom and prudence, and animated with a sublime spirit of christian charity. Mr. Moranvillé was ordained in 1784, and was sent soon after to Cayenne in French Guiana, where he exercised his zeal so successfully, that he was beloved by all the virtuous. The admirable effects of his direction manifested themselves even at that time. Of this we have two striking instances. Having won back a female slave to the way of virtue, so strongly fortified by grace was this poor black, that rather than offend God she submitted to be scourged to death. She was told to exclaim while the scourging was going on; "Pardon, Master, pardon!" instead of which, she heroically repeated; "Pardon, O my God, pardon!" Another slave was sentenced to be executed on a moving scaffold, and the hands and feet of this poor criminal were to be chopped off, in different parts of the city before the stroke of death should be dealt. Prepared by Father Moranvillé, the slave was perfectly resigned to his sad fate, and when the executioner cut off the right hand, it fell upon the feet of Father Moranvillé, who was striving to comfort him. The poor negro, seeing that his bleeding hand had stained the shoe of his faithful pastor, cried out: "I beg your pardon, Father," and with

since they have, at once, the first and most necessary disposition, innocence. How sweet the office to prepare the young to receive their Lord and Saviour in the loving tabernacles of their hearts! To thus prepare thousands upon thousands, is yearly, the happy and dearly prized privilege of the Sisters of Charity in our city.

During the retreat already spoken of, Father Moranvillé in one of his instructions spoke of the conversion of Mrs. Seton, and of her intention to form a religious community.

---

his other hand instantly removed the bleeding member. Soon after, Father Moranvillé was reduced to such a state by a disease peculiar to that climate, that he was pronounced already dead, his heart had ceased to beat, no pulse could be discerned. But as the chill of death had not stiffened his limbs, the burial was delayed forty eight hours, owing to the "absurd and unreasonable objections" as the doctor urged them to be, of a servant of the Father. Finally, the immediate preparations for the burial were commenced; the room was left alone for about a quarter of an hour, during which time, the good Father revived, and was found sitting up on the supposed bed of death. A like incident is recorded of St. Teresa. O! how merciful the dispensation that granted yet more years of usefulness in both these cases! Soon the French Revolution and subsequent changes of government occurred. More was required of the priests in Guiana than could be conscientiously conceded, and Father Moranvillé, came to Baltimore. Dr. Neale, coadjutor of the Venerable Archbishop Carroll, had labored in Guiana, and no doubt knew of the sanctity and zeal so conspicuous in Father Moranvillé. In 1805, the good Father Moranvillé was made pastor of the above mentioned Church. His active zeal, far from being confined to his congregation, displayed itself in the various efforts to advance the general interests of religion.

Elizabeth, on hearing this, felt a strong desire to become one of her children. Feeling diffident about making her wishes known, she was delighted to hear Father Moranvillé propose that she should join Mother Seton, and retire from the world. Soon after, Mother Seton visited Baltimore, and Father Moranvillé introduced Elizabeth to her.* The happy result of the interview was her reception as a member of the new community. Her mother, and one of her brothers opposed her going, very decidedly, but Elizabeth was firm to her holy purpose. She set out and arrived at St. Joseph's on the feast of St. Patrick, 1810. On arriving at the Valley, she was received in the kindest manner by Mother Seton, and, with her maternal blessing, entered on the duties of her new life, an humble novice in the school of divine charity.

---

* Father Moranvillé was one of the earliest and most zealous friends of the Community of the Sisters of Charity. He allured many to the beautiful path of Christain perfection, and his congregation furnished some of its first members.

CHAPTER III.

Her Early Religious Life—Her Trials—Beautiful Advice Given Her—Short Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Community at St. Joseph's Before Her Entrance.

"ONE thing I have asked of the Lord; this will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. For better is one day in Thy courts above thousands."

As Elizabeth was possessed of the most refined sensibilities, and of great beauty and strength of character, she must have appreciated the ennobling, elevating influence dominant in that true earthly paradise of religion, presided over by the saintly Mother Seton. The sisters were in great poverty in a wordly sense of the word, but they possessed the treasure of heaven, in their midst, Jesus in the august sacrament of His love. Oh! how their fervent hearts united around Him on His altar throne, for He was really their all! They performed their daily duties as so many rounds of charity, each one of which brought them nearer to the foot of the sanctuary, whither the bell so frequently called them. Rev. Mr. David after-

wards coadjutor of the venerable Bishop Flaget of Bardstown, was at that time the ecclesiastical superior of the community. Although the rules for the Sisters of Charity were not obtained from France until three years after, the sisters had certain temporary regulations to which they adhered, as we learn from the following paragraph in a letter of Father David's to Mother Seton, dated December 28, 1809. "I did not expect," he says, "that the sisters in their embarrassed state would observe as much regularity as it were to be wished in a novitiate; I am glad to hear that the essential exercises are never omitted. Mental prayer holds the first rank among these. I wish the sisters to make themselves as perfect as they can, with the help of divine grace, in this holy art of conversing with God; recollection and disengagement are the two most necessary dispositions for it. Next to meditation, spiritual reading and the examination of conscience are of the greatest importance."

Elizabeth was most happy and contented in this new home, as we learn from the following letter of Father Moranvillé* addressed to her

* Perhaps there is no stronger proof of Elizabeth's virtuous dispositions, and of the promise she gave of being an efficient servant of God, than the undiminished interest Father Moranvillé took in her from the time of her conversion until his death.

from Baltimore, April 4, 1810. "My dear child, your worthy Mother [Seton] has been so kind as to write to me concerning you. It gave me great pleasure to hear you were much pleased with the institute you have embraced, and the discipline by which you are to be ruled. The readiness of your heart for this way of living is the effect of God's favors and mercy upon you. Cultivate it, my dear child, by a faithful correspondence on your own part. But the distress you are in for having left your mother without having obtained her consent is the result of tender and natural feelings to which you ought not to give way. Mind that the Spouse of your soul is a jealous lover; if He permits nature to act her own part, it is to give you the occasion of a triumph which will greatly tend to His divine honor. Never hesitate to give the preference to your dear Lord, and to seek for your comfort, in your generous submission to His blessed will. It is not you who have chosen Him, but it is He who has chosen you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit, or the merits of your sacrifice, may remain with you. It is He who has called you from your kindred, and out of your mother's house, to go into the land which He has shown you. He interdicts your loving any creature

more than Him. He promised you a hundred fold for having left everything for His sake. Do not then look behind, let the dead, as He says, bury their dead. You will be more serviceable to your mother's happiness in your retirement, than under her eyes. I promise you that I will exert my utmost, to bring her to better dispositions, and will avail myself of every opportunity to speak to her, and to reconcile her mind to God's will and appointment." In the sequel of this same letter he begs her to let him know what hour of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament she has chosen, so that he may join with her.

Elizabeth's soul was all too precious in the sight of God, not to pass through the crucible of tribulation, that it might be refined and purified, like gold in the furnace. St. Francis de Sales assures us, that he never knew a soul to make rapid progress in perfection that was not tried; and does not the Holy Ghost tell us: "Entering into the service of God, prepare thy soul for temptation?" Fortunately for Elizabeth, she found an experienced guide in her worthy superioress, Mother Seton, so well known at present through her interesting biography by Father White. Among papers of the community, at Mount St. Vincent, is the following

short sketch of the life of this good Mother, in the handwriting of Bishop Bruté. "Elizabeth A. Bayley was born in the City of New York, in 1774. As there were few schools in New York, at that early period, her education devolved almost entirely on her father, whose paternal care in this respect was amply repaid. Endowed with a superior intellect, strong mind and correct judgment, she soon by unremitting diligence became solidly educated as far as the science of this world is concerned. She early evinced a strong inclination to piety, and wore a small crucifix on her person, wondering why that symbol of salvation should not be equally dear to all calling themselves christians. She was fond of the Holy Scriptures, and of all religious works. She regretted much that outside the Catholic Church, there were no convents or monastaries. She became a member of the Episcopalian Church before her marriage and adhered to it until her conversion. She was much endeared to her ministers of error, particularly Bishop Hobart; still she found her heart dissatisfied and unsettled, and was once ready to turn a willing mind to that unfortunate system of infidelity taught by J. J. Rousseau and others. But mark now, the grace and her fidelity. Her father, the distinguished Dr.

Bayley so much esteemed during the American Revolution and till his death in 1801, gave her in marriage to William Seton, Jr., son of a gentleman of high standing in society. All the branches of Miss Bayley's family and her husband's were the most zealous of their sect; this is true particularly of those residing in New York. After being tried by reverses of fortune her husband's health declined. At the suggestion of physicians, they travelled to Leghorn to visit their great friends, the Messrs. Filicchi.

These gentlemen were of such high repute in their city that one of them was afterwards sent to Paris to transact some business bearing on the Leghorn commerce, with the mighty emperor of the French. At the seat of the Messrs. Filicchi at Pisa, Mr. William Seton died on the 27th of December, 1803, aged thirty-seven years.

Thus Mrs. Seton was left one of those desolate widows of whom St. Paul speaks, and surrounded by a young family. She was firmly resolved to seek only to please God on earth and from the many excellent instructions received from the zealous and pious family of Filicchi, she felt strongly inclined to enter the Church of our Lord.

However, she returned to America without having professed herself a catholic. Mr. Anthony Filicchi accompanied herself and her fami-

ly to New York, where her mind soon became a prey to a sore perplexity arising from the religious contests she had with him and her family. Happily she was supported under her trials by letters from many learned prelates and priests."

The following from Rev. Mr. Cheverus, then a secular priest in Boston, seems to have fixed her hitherto unsettled mind. Father White in his life of Mother Seton remarks that he had searched for this letter in vain. Mother Jerome chanced to find it,* and for a moment we will intertupt Bishop Brute's sketch that we may give this edifying paper.

BOSTON, March 4, 1805.

MADAM:

I received a few days ago, your favor of the 19th of February, and have perused it several times, with the greatest attention. I have received, also, by a private hand, a letter from our respectable friend, Mr. Filicchi, this morning.

I shall enclose this in my answer to him, as you have not favored me with your direction.

Your earnest wish to find out the truth, your fervent prayers, your fastings, etc., will obtain from the Father of Lights, "who seeth in secret," that He should bestow upon you

* Among some papers belonging to the Very Rev. Dr. Power.

the precious gift of faith. The God of all comfort will perfect in you the good work which He has begun.

In your present state of mind, the reading of controversial books would be perfectly useless.

You have read and heard enough to be acquainted with the argument on both sides, and those in favor of the Catholic Church have, as they will when examined with candor, convinced you that She is really the Church against which the gates of hell can never prevail.

You are told that "because the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church, Jesus Christ has separated it from Antichrist, etc., or, in other words, the Church of Rome." But it follows from hence that previous to the separation, *i.e*, *the Reformation*, the Church of Jesus was united with, was a member of Antichrist, and had been so for several centuries, and, of course the gates of hell had prevailed against it.

Your conscience whispers sometimes that you are too partial to the catholic side and unwilling to pass to the other side when your ideas seem to lead you to it. But it appears to me, that if at times, you have doubts, anxieties, you are never for a moment a strong protestant, although, you are often, you say, a good catholic, and I believe you are always a good

catholic. The doubts which arise in your mind, do not destroy your faith, they only disturb your mind. Who in this life, my dear Madam, is perfectly free from such troubles? "We see as through a glass, in an obscure manner," we stand like the Israelites at the foot of the holy mountain, but in spite of dark clouds and the noise of thunder, we perceive some rays of the glory of the Lord, and we hear His divine voice. I would therefore advise your joining the Catholic Church as soon as possible, and when doubts arise, say only: 'I believe, O Lord, help Thou my unbelief.'

Your separation from the world, the privations which your present circumstances prescribe, are so many precious favors from your God, who wants to attach you exclusively to Himself. I am extremely edified with your christian courage and resignation. But let me beg of you to be very prudent in your fastings and other voluntary mortifications. I refer you for this to St. Francis of Sales' 'Devout Life.' Read often the 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th chapters of St. John, particularly the last. You will find in the 'Following of Christ,' many passages exactly suiting your present situation.

Permit me to recommend myself to your prayers. I have prayed, and shall pray for you every

day. Believe me, my dear madam, with sincere sentiments of respect, esteem, and friendship. Your most obedient, humble servant,

JOHN CHEVERUS.

On the margin of this letter, written in Mother Seton's own hand, are the following words: "Bishop Cheverus' first letter in answer to an earnest entreaty for his advice. Entered the Church immediately on the 14th of March, 1805."

But to return to the words of the venerable Bishop Brute; "Divine grace having thus obtained its decisive triumph, she [Mother Seton] made her first communion on the feast of the Annunciation, 1805, receiving from the hands of Rev. M. O'Brien, Pastor of St. Peter's Church, New York.* Oh! what will not be granted to those who generously correspond to their first graces! Listen all to your own inspirations and say to your Jesus, "From the neglect of Thy holy inspirations, deliver us, O Lord!" for no one can know till too late, how much vitally depends on fidelity to grace. See

* The altar, before which Mother Seton knelt, is now in the basement, of St. Peter's Church. The Sisters of Charity, attached to St. Peter's parish, hear Mass there daily and approach those same rails to receive Holy Communion.

the consequences! The next invitation of grace was to give herself entirely to the service of God Happy was it for her that like the glorious widows that preceeded her, Sts. Bridget, Frances of Rome, Jane de Chantal, and the Venerable Madame Le Gras, she listened attentively, and dedicated herself wholly to the advancement of the glory of God and of His divine religion.

The designs of Providence were for awhile unrevealed. For a long time they seemed to draw her to Canada, but the guardian angels of the United States prevailed. She lingered in New York for awhile with her sister, Miss Cecilia Seton, whom she had gained to the faith. But called to Baltimore, in June, 1808, she directed a school, near St. Mary's College, uniting around her some Sisters in Jesus Christ, who with herself, shared the happiness of founding the holy institute of St. Joseph's, Emmettsburg. She accepted, and coöperated with the grace that inspired her to undertake to establish the Sisters of Charity on land procured for her by Mr. Cooper (another zealous convert), and modelled after the institute of St. Vincent de Paul, in France; destined like it, to embrace every kind of good work conducing to the glory of God, and the assistance and salvation of

man. Messrs. Dubourg, David, Dubois, and others under Archbishop Carroll, presided over the institution, as ecclesiastical superiors. This sisterhood has since been wonderfully blessed, the fruit and consequences of the fidelity to grace in Mother Seton, by which her heart was entirely given to seek her God alone, and His best love! In 1809 these pilgrims removed to a log house, near Mt. St. Mary's, and soon after to the old farm house, in the Valley, now known as St. Joseph's, where they dwelt until the new house near by was so far completed as to allow the Sisters to occupy at least a part of it. They moved into it, February 20, 1810, about a month before Elizabeth's arrival in the Valley."

CHAPTER IV.

Elizabeth's Trials—She is Tempted to Leave the Community—Her Sister Susanna, Enters the Church—Elizabeth's Letter to Her Mother—Her Mother's Death—Elizabeth is made Sacristan—Letter of Father Moranvillé.

It did not take Mother Seton long to form a very favorable idea of Elizabeth, who was destined to become so efficient a member of her Community. However, the demon of disgust for so holy a vocation could not fail to attack so promising a champion as our youthful convert. The Holy Spirit warns us all in these words: "Entering into the service of God, prepare thy soul for temptation." This struggle was as severe as the issue was to be glorious. The privations and hardships to be encountered at that time at St. Joseph's were countless. The youthful aspirant had to embrace some of those heroic mortifications, which are recorded in the life of St. Vincent, who must have looked on his dear daughters, with singular delight. Straw beds and no bedsteads, the coarest food in every respect, and the severest labors were their portion. The sediments of a single cup of their home-made carrot coffee filled half the

measure. Elizabeth, on one occasion, was sent to knead a large bowl of bread. The task seemed truly an herculean one to her who had never before prepared even a small quantity for the oven. She used to bring tubs of water from a spring at quite a distance from the house, and aid in carrying buckets of mortar for the new building. No doubt, dear Mother Seton endeavored to make all within the sphere of her influence view their daily duties in a supernatural light, uniting them with the equally arduous and humble duties performed in the holy house of Nazareth, by Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. To an eye of faith, such as Elizabeth possessed, obedience seems to invest every action it ordains with a halo of heavenly light. These duties themselves, how fatiguing soever, could hardly have discouraged one so fortified by grace; but the enemy of every good, transforming himself into the appearance of an angel of light, suggested to her, that she ought to yield to the reiterated entreaties of her beloved mother; that perhaps, she might be instrumental in bringing that dear mother into the true fold, and thus taste some of that heavenly happiness experienced under her own eyes, by the pious daughters of Mother Seton, who were united in the same faith with their mother. It is at least

certain that a letter her mother wrote her about this period, made a trying impression on her mind. She became so unhappy at one time, that the director of the community was only able to calm her, by advising her to delay her departure until the weather became more favorable. Indeed Mother Elizabeth used to say: "If the roads had not been so muddy,* I should have set out for Baltimore on foot," and she said she was actually dressed for that purpose once when Father Dubois met her and persuaded her to delay a little. So fierce a battle was to have mighty results. Holy Week came with its hallowed remembrances, its offices, and elevating influences. Before its close, God was pleased to dissipate all her doubts and anxieties about her vocation, and all thoughts of abandoning the religious life vanished from her mind. She did not fail, however, to inform her spiritual Father of the storm that had just passed over, and she received the following advice.† "You have experienced, my dear child, that no place screens us from temptations: we carry everywhere our own weakness and infirmity; everywhere we stand much in need of a heavenly assistance. But what ought to com-

---

* It was in Spring.

† In a letter dated June 18, 1810.

fort us is, it is never refused to fervent and importunate supplications, and thanks be to God, I find, with a heartfelt satisfaction, that you are more reconciled to His blessed will. No doubt, flesh and blood will sometimes interfere with our generous sacrifices, but we must never lose sight, that we ought, by entering on a life of retirement and self-denial, exert all our endeavors to subdue those powerful enemies of salvation, and seriously examine by what spirit we are led. Human considerations and motives, however plausible they may be, should never, for a moment, make us hesitate in following what we have known for some time, to be the will of our God. Consult this blessed will in your frequent communications with Him, and with those who represent Him, and make it the only rule of your purposes, affections, and desires. I greatly rejoice that you are now more at peace with yourself than ever. You seem to entertain some hopes of seeing me again, but upon what foundation? You have now, my dear child, more than you had, when under my direction, so do not allow yourself to form a wish which, in the least, might be in opposition with the appointments of God. Be satisfied and content with your present situation, nothing more is to be wished for, but to advance daily in

The Catholic
Theological Union
LIBRARY
Chicago, Ill.

the way of perfection, which God will be pleased to manifest to you, through the ministry of your superiors."

It has been remarked by many holy individuals, that the blessing of God seems to rest visibly on those families that have furnished members for religious orders. The subsequent history of almost all of Elizabeth's family, is an illustration of this. Her sister, Susanna, was the first after herself, to enter our Holy Church. In less than a month after Elizabeth's arrival, at St. Joseph's, this good news was announced to her by Father Moranvillé,* who spoke thus of her sister's dispositions: "She gives me, every day, the greatest comfort, by her generous resolutions. She feels in herself an ardent desire to improve the blessings which God has bestowed on her. Easter Monday is the day appointed for her being received into the Church, and the next Sunday after, for her first communion. I hope that these glorious days will give occasion for your mother to reflect upon the mercies which God pours so abundantly on His own, and perhaps to wish for the like blessings for herself. Join us in fervent prayer to beg this favor of Him who holds our

---

* April 4, 1810.

hearts in His hands, and moves them at His pleasure." Susanna was the sister, I believe, who was present at Elizabeth's baptism. The conversion of this second daughter, quite exasperated the poor mother, and soon after she resolved to leave Baltimore. This afflicted Elizabeth, for she knew that her mother would be thus, in a measure, withdrawn from much salutary influence. In a letter to Elizabeth, the mother gave evidence of the prejudiced state of her mind, assuring her that she prayed God to open her eyes on her situation. To this, Elizabeth was counselled to reply: "Mamma what do you mean by this? Do you mean to say that I am blind to my own imperfections, that there is still in me much to be reformed? If you mean this, yes, Mamma, I find every day that I might do still more for the love of Him, who has sacrificed everything for my sake. I am still attached to myself, to many things which, alas! prevent my sacrifice from being as acceptable to God as it would be, if I were more faithful than I am, in complying with His blessed will; but, dear Mamma, I trust in His divine mercy. God permits us to be subject to many imperfections, during our whole life, in order to make us sensible of our inability, and to impress us with a due sense of

humility, that blessed virtue, which is the groundwork of all others. I humble myself before Him at the sight of my nothingness, and incessantly beg for His grace to make me walk in a manner worthy of my vocation. If you mean, I am under a great mistake with regard to the catholic religion which I glory to profess,—ah! Mamma, upon what ground do you establish such an assertion? Is it upon the feelings of your own conscience? I have mine as you have yours, and you may be assured that for a fortune, for the whole world, I would never change my belief. I wish my salvation were as secure as my faith. But the assurance of our eternal happiness cannot be had here below. 'No man knows,' says the Holy Ghost, 'whether he be worthy of love or hatred.' He who stands, says St. Paul, 'ought to take heed lest he fall.' 'With fear and trembling we ought to work out our salvation.' 'There is a way which seemeth just to a man, but the end thereof leads to death.' Prov. 14. 2. But with regard to my faith, not the least doubt, not the least anxiety of mind disturbs me. I have those pastors who possess a lawful ordination as the authoritative dispensers of God's mysteries; those very ministers whom Jesus commands us to hear under pain of being

looked upon as heathens and publicans. I could say a great deal to you on the subject; I refer you to one of my former letters in which I have spoken to the purpose. Read it with a spirit of impartiality, read many catholic books which will make you sensible of those heavenly truths which I will cherish and embrace forever."

Elizabeth continued her prayers to God for her dear mother's conversion. So earnest were they, that Father Moranvillé, in recommending her to pray on, said to her: "Will that mamma perish forever, for whom her dear child poured so many tears?" Her mother died soon after this, and without having entered the Church; but that previous to her death, she had become somewhat mollified, might be judged from a message sent to Elizabeth.

Every day Elizabeth found in her holy vocation, new motives to thank God for having withdrawn her from the vicissitudes of a worldly life. She was taught now, that she had only to please Him who never changes, Who is always omnipotent and merciful; that the more she exerted herself in His divine service the more abundant would be His favors to her. Yet that she might not always feel the

comforts of God's divine presence, and the sweetness of His communications, since He would have us sensible that we are pilgrims and travellers on earth, and are not to find a solid rest until we arrive at our journey's end. He tried her in many ways. Thus also are we often allowed to meet with difficulties and trials, and to feel our misery and inability; but in the midst of all these conflicts we know, that Jesus stands by us, always ready to stretch out a helping hand, amidst those struggles by which He is glorified when we bear them with a loving heart.

She had not been long at St. Joseph's when she was made sacristan, and she took the greatest delight in fulfilling the duties of her holy charge. From her piety, we may readily suppose, that she never forgot that "holy things should be touched with holy hands." Her duties under this head were many, as she had the care of the little chapel at St. Joseph's, of the church on the Mountain a mile distant, and of one in Emmittsburg. Her Saturdays were spent in a kind of holy pilgrimage. She used to carry with her a portmanteau containing the altar linens, etc., and would set out at an early hour for the Mountain Church, which she was accustomed to sweep and arrange with scrupu-

lous care. Unwilling to eat within the sacred precincts, she would go out and fix herself a sheltered seat in the open air where she would dine. Then she would wend her way to the village of Emmittsburg, where she performed the same duties, with a faith so lively that the labor was truly one of love. For nearly a year, she performed these pilgrimages on foot, but having taken a severe cold on one of these pedestrian excursions, the good Mother Seton arranged that she should henceforth go on horseback. Mother used to tell how she was furnished with a horse. It seems the animal had been given to one of the young postulants as a portion of her dowry on entering the community and thus was Mother Seton enabled to allow the sister this equestrian exercise.

About this time, Elizabeth betrayed too much anxiety on account of the slow progress she seemed to make in perfection. She manifested this indirectly in a letter to Father Moranvillé from whom she received a beautiful lesson: "You appear," said he, "by your last letter to be rather too much agitated, and in some trouble. I am sure, it does not proceed from your weak state of health. Our minds should grow stronger from our infirmities, by reflecting on the blessings we derive from patience and re-

signation under them. Does it not then arise from the little proficiency that you say you make in the way of perfection? Ah! this consciousness of spiritual poverty and inability, ought to ground us more and more in the practice of the favorite virtue of our good Master—I mean humility. And if we but make this the foundation of all the rest, nothing will disturb us, not even our daily imperfections, for they will contribute to a more perfect knowledge of our misery and of our nothingness, and thus afford us the opportunity to exercise ourselves in frequent acts of this blessed virtue. Never suffer yourself to be disquieted by anything: be as a good child in the hands of your Heavenly Father; be satisfied with the little He gives you, praising and giving Him due thanks for it. I am sorry to hear that our good Mother [Seton] is in a poor state of health. I wish from my heart, that God may long preserve her for the good of the community, which she supports by her example and activity." The practical lessons contained in this letter influenced Elizabeth's whole life, for certainly, she was ever ruled by just such views.

She continued to discharge these duties of sacristan for many long years. She used to

take all her sewing materials for making or mending albs, surplices, etc., to the community room, where she sat at no small inconvenience to herself, for she was too exact to the regulations of the house to ask for a dispensation. Mother Seton remarking this, gave her permission to perform her duties in the sacristy, if she chose, but Elizabeth wisely judged that the enemy of her salvation would find her soul more difficult to access in the company of her fervent, recollected sisters. She rarely absented herself from the community room, affording to all who saw her a perfect model of religious recollection, while the statues, sacred pictures, and crucifix, which were the only ornaments this room contained, inspired her daily with more devotion, reminding her that she lived in the presence of God.

CHAPTER V.

Rules Received from Paris—Archbishop Carroll's Letter of Approval—St. Vincent de Paul and Madame Le Gras—Elizabeth the First Novice in the United States—Services of Father Bruté to the Community—His Meditations.

We have already remarked that the Rules had not been received from France before Elizabeth's entrance into religion. But in the August of the same year, the Right Rev. Bishop Flaget, while in Paris, obtained them, and brought them to Emmittsburg.

Because of the needs of the country the additional duty of the higher education of girls was added to these. They were then submitted to Archbishop Carroll for his approval.

The good archbishop studied the Rules and Constitutions with all that attention, which his known interest in the spiritual welfare of the community, at St. Joseph's, commanded. In a letter, dated September 11, 1811, he signified his approbation of them. The good Mother lent this letter and several others to Father White, when

he was compiling the life of Mother Seton and as he has given the whole of the text,* a few extracts will here suffice.

HON. AND DEAR MADAM:

Shall I confess, that I am deeply humiliated at being called upon to give a final sanction to a rule of conduct and plan of religious government, by which it is intended to promote and preserve amongst many beloved spouses of Jesus Christ a spirit of solid and sublime religious perfection? When I remember how many prayers, fastings, watchings, and other means, were employed by the Holy Founders of religious institutions, to obtain light and assistance from the Holy Ghost to render their constitutions and rules adapted to the objects of their pious zeal, I am so sensible of my unworthiness, that I would certainly decline from the task, if I did not entertain a confidence that it may please God to bestow a blessing on the ministerial acts of the ministers of religion whom He has constituted, to which they are not entitled, if only their private worth were considered. Under this impression, therefore, I shall and do now give my approbation to

---

* Life of Mrs. A. E. Seton, page 309.

ST. PATRICK'S ORPHAN ASYLUM, Prince Street, New York.

the constitutions exhibited to me by Mr. Dubois after they shall receive the alterations suggested to, and by him. . . . . Mr. Dubois has been very explicit in communicating, I believe, whatever it was proper for me to know; on my side, it has been my endeavor, when I read the Constitutions, to consult, in the first place, the individual happiness of your dear sisters and consequently your own; secondly to render their plan of life useful to religion, and the public; thirdly to confine the administration of your own affairs and the internal and domestic government, as much as possible, to your own Constitutions once adopted, and within your own walls. Your superior or confessor alone need be informed or consulted in matters where the mother and her council need his advice. This, however, is to be understood so as not to exclude the essential superintendance and control of the archbishop over every community in his diocese.* I shall congratulate you and your beloved sisters, when the Constitutions are adopted. It will be like freeing you from a state, in which it was difficult to walk straight, as you had no certain way in which to proceed. In the meantime, assure

*This last sentence is supplied in the same connection from an omitted portion of the letter.

yourself and them, of my utmost solicitude for your advancement in the service and favor of God, of my reliance on your prayers, of your prosperity in the important duty of education, which will, and must long be, your principal, and will always be your partial employment. A century, at least, will pass, before the exigencies and habits of this country will require, and hardly admit of the charitable exercises toward the sick sufficient to employ any number of the Sisters out of our larger cities; and, therefore, they must consider the business of education as a laborious, charitable, and permanent object of their religious duty.

I am, with esteem and respect, honored and Dear Madam, your servant in Christ.

J., ARCHBISHOP OF BALTIMORE."

The rules and constitutions thus given to the sisterhood, raised it to a co-partnership with the Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul in France, since the members were called on to discharge the same duties, with one additional charge. The nature of these duties, is so well known in our country now that little need be said on the subject. "Vincent de Paul is recognized throughout the world as a man* beloved by God and by men,

* Spirit of St. Vincent de Paul.

"*Dilectus Deo et hominibus*," for he was one of those men of mercy, whose piety will be commemorated forever in the Church. Kings, princes, ministers of state, bishops, magistrates, noblemen, and all the people have with Bossuet regarded him as the saint of his age. He was the model of pastors, the father of the indigent, the support of bishops, the counsellor of kings, the defender of the Church, and the soul of all that was undertaken greatly conducive to the glory of God during his life. Trophies of his virtue are erected from pole to pole, and the lapse of more than two hundred years, has served but to enhance the opinion of his high merits. It is known that he distributed more in alms in twenty years than many sovereigns would do during a century. St. Vincent de Paul had the happiness to meet in Madam Le Gras all the talents necessary to aid him in his projects. This incomparable woman was given to her age, according to the judgment of five great bishops, to convince the world that neither weakness of sex, delicacy of constitution, nor even the engagements of society are insuperable obstacles to salvation. He employed her on different occasions and charged her, in November, 1633, with the company of the Daughters of Charity, of whom she

was the first superioress. Four young persons selected by Vincent to be her first daughters were lodged and entertained in her own house, where she neglected nothing that could contribute to make them worthy of the beautiful title which the judgment of the public conferred on them and her. Formed by her, these young persons edified the parishes to which they were sent. Such beautiful examples struck several other young persons of the same age and sex, who offered themselves to render their services to Jesus Christ in the persons of the poor. Such was the commencement of that company of virgins which is now known far and wide under the name of Daughters or Sisters of Charity. As insignificant in its birth as a mustard seed, it has become a great tree. Its roots nourished less from the substance of the earth than by the dew of heaven have been spread throughout all France and into the most distant regions of the earth: and presently, wherever it shoots its roots, the orphan so long abandoned, the desolate widow, the soldier covered with wounds, the bashful poor, the sick of every kind breathe under the shadow of its salutary branches and find nourishment, health and life. Their holy founder charged them with the care of foundlings, with the

The Catholic Theological Union LIBRARY Chicago, Ill.

instruction of young persons deprived of the means of obtaining an education, with the care of a great number of hospitals and even with the galley slaves. The Constitutions he gave them, were a masterpiece of prudence and wisdom. The protection which God accorded to those who thus served Him in His members perfectly reassured him amidst the dangers to which they are exposed. It is known, that the holy founder entertained a particular respect for these Daughters of Charity of whatever condition they might be. Their name alone of "Servants of the Poor," always affected this "Father of all the afflicted."

As the sisters at St. Joseph's had now adopted these rules of the Sisters of Charity in France, they began at once to prepare themselves for their holy vows under the direct or indirect guidance of the holiest prelates and most zealous servants of God then living in the United States. Elizabeth was the first to put on the coarse habit of an humble novice. The material of which it was made was so coarse, that, if held up, the light could be seen through it as through a veil. The novitiate was regularly opened in the beginning of the year 1812; four or five months after the Rules, had been received from France. Father Moran-

villé had heard of these happy events, and in a letter to Elizabeth, whom we may, from this time, style *Sister* Elizabeth,* he congratulates her upon this subject, and offers, as usual, some beautiful instructions. "I hope that, by this time, you know the rules you have to follow for your whole life, having had at St. Joseph's Valley, the Rev. gentlemen, who, in concert with your worthy superior, have probably fixed and settled all this important and essential point. This will be the compass which will direct you in everything, the ever-standing law which you will always be eager to observe, as you will always see in it the Beloved's appointments and blessed will: not that I think you were before that period without rule, for the will of a superior makes up for all the rest, and a perfect submission to it leads us on safely to the happy term to which we ought continually to aspire. It is, however, a great ease to the mind to know all that we have to perform every day; to have all our actions particularly determined, and to prepare ourselves before hand to perform them to the best of our power. I give thanks to God for increasing

* Novices on receiving the habit, are given the name by which they will thenceforth be known in religion. In this case it was not changed.

in you, the love of your own situation. The work is half done when we cherish the state He has called us to. We may still find therein difficulties, that weight of our spiritual infirmities which causes us to be displeased with ourselves, but this is unavoidable. It enters into the plan of that amiable Providence which ordains it so, for the perfection of that blessed virtue of humility, which is never better supported than by a lively sense of our own miseries and imperfections. Be of good heart, my dear child, our daily faults and oversights give us a greater knowledge of ourselves. And of what else are we capable, but to offend in many things? What must be a great comfort to the true servants of God is to think that our spiritual infirmities may be made subservient to our improvement in the practice of self-contempt and self-denial."

The novitiate is the most important and critical part of the religious life. In it, the young aspirant must form correct ideas of the obligations she is preparing to assume, must inure herself to the practice of her duties, and be so moulded under the benign influence of religion as to become a perfect model of religious virtue. It is all important that she should not have any but the most exalted

desires of perfection; for, as an artist first sketches in outline what he purposes to portray in living light, and does not afterwards in completing his works, go beyond the limits of that outline, even so, the young religious forms her conceptions during her novitiate of the manner in which she is to imitate her divine Model and Saviour, and, after her profession, she rarely exceeds those first conceptions. Happy then was it, for the interests of her soul, that Sister Elizabeth had holy and well informed guides in the ways of religious perfection. Had not their names and virtues come down to our time, we might still have formed a correct idea of their capability and sanctity from the enlightened views sister Elizabeth possessed of her holy vocation. The characteristic virtue of the mother house at St. Joseph's, seems to have been devotion to Jesus in the sacrament of His love. Jesus as the Son of Justice, illumined that sacred spot, and the sisters were so faithful in keeping their hearts turned towards Him, that they seemed constantly to receive the direct communications of His love. In 1812, the community was so happy as to receive the services of a most excellent confessor in the person of Father Bruté. Until his episcopal consecration in 1834, he

continued almost uninterruptedly to attend spiritually to the community. His views were all heavenly. Mother Jerome who knew him remarked that he seemed insensible to all save God and the things of God. Conveniences, and inconveniences, were alike to him. He used to say Mass four times a week at St. Joseph's, and often did so while his frozen garments were clinging to his person. So tender was his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament that he used even to note in his diary the number of times he had touched It during the day. This, his truly ecstatic devotion exemplified on so many occasions, had been, no doubt, fostered in early childhood by his close proximity to Jesus under the sacramental veils. For, during the French Revolution and the "Reign of Terror" he often carried the pyx inside his waistcoat to the houses of the sick and dying, while the priest would follow after. This was to provide against any insult to the Blessed Sacrament, in case the priest should be apprehended.

The community at Mount St. Vincent have a number of meditations for whitsuntide, advent, lent, retreats, and for the octave of Corpus Christi, which he composed expressly for the community, and which are either copied

or revised, by himself. Some idea of his almost ecstatic love of God, can be obtained from an extract from one of these for the octave of Corpus Christi. The meditation is headed thus: The Daughters of the Charity of Jesus delight in the sweetness of the infinite condescension of His presence among us:

'Here Thou art, our Jesus! and we come with our whole hearts to adore and love and enter on our meditation in the silence of love. Thou art here!—*here*, in this tabernacle, at the smallest distance. Our arms stretched out to Thee would almost touch the throne of Thy love—the little dwelling we have prepared for Thee, and in which, Thou condescendest *to abide*. O Jesus, Jesus, our Jesus!—silence, love and adoration.—Jesus here!—Oh! the happiness of our life!—every morning here to appear in His blessed presence!—to have our anticipated heaven with Him on earth!—What are we that we have been chosen! Alas! He has not done so to all nations, nor indeed to all souls even among His faithful. What have we done to deserve it? We have sinned—yet, He has called us, He has chosen us, He has given us the better part! O our Jesus! we have sinned, we do not even now in the midst of such abundant mercies love enough, and yet, Thou

makest us here blessed above all others—Silence and gratitude! our Jesus is here! Jesus in our tabernacle! the blessing of blessings, the last excess of His love! Ah! when they tell us there is a land on earth in which, some ages ago, the great God of Heaven, the lover of our souls, came down to live and to die amongst us, to love and redeem, to open Heaven to every human soul so dear to Him,—when they tell us *there is a land*, the blessed ground of which has been trodden by the feet of *God made man*, the fields, the mountains, the deserts, the villages, the little towns and even the great ones, trodden indeed by Him,—the grass, the dust, and the burning sands, by the Divine feet of our Jesus—that the waters bathed His sacred flesh, the winds refreshed Him, the dew covered His Head and the Sun did not spare it—that every one could see and hear Him whether in the desert, in the house, on the roads, by the shores, with His dear elect fishermen, or when in the Temple itself, His Father's house and His own, it melts our very hearts! O what then, when we can point Him out, mark His door, the door of His little dwelling among us, waiting for the moment it will open and He will appear in truly hidden, and therefore, more amiable

Majesty—Ah! sisters, you the Daughters of His Charity, with every breath should praise and love *our Jesus in our tabernacle!*

His prophet tells us that from the rising to the setting of the sun in every place a pure offering is offered to the Lord. O my soul! hear this word with delight—ascend in spirit on the very clouds of heaven to behold at one view this universal sacrifice, the altar everywhere erected—the priest standing—the victim offered. —O our Jesus! over the whole globe I view at once the universal sacrifice, and Thyself everywhere the Priest, and Victim. I see but Thee in all—the magnificent or simple altar, the stately temple or the humble chapel, marked to my delighted eye, by the standard of Thy cross, speak equally the heavenly indication, Jesus is here! our Jesus alone I see. O Jesus! Thy mortal representative disappears before my faith, as do the feeble elements under which Thou art pleased to veil Thyself. *O Jesus!* Now with the exulting prophet, we enjoy the blessed accomplishment of Thy gracious promise, and unite with the divine and universal Sacrifice, which every moment, day and night, is celebrated round our earth, from our happy valley and mountain, to its furthest extremities!"

CHAPTER VI.

The First Vows—Sister Elizabeth Assistant Mother—Letters of Father Moranvillé—Sister Elizabeth Appointed Mistress of Novices—Father Bruté's Idea of a Sister—Duties of a Sister Explained by Father Moranvillé.

THE time now aproached for the little fervent community at St. Joseph's, to make their consecration to God, by the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. In 1809; Mother Seton had made the two last mentioned vows privately in the presence of Bishop Carroll, for the space of one year. On the 19th of July, 1813, the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul, eighteen members pronounced their first vows; namely the Mother Superior, Mary Eliza Seton, and Sisters Rose White, Catherine Mullen, Ann Gruber, Elizabeth Boyle, Angela Brady, Cecilia O'Conway, Susan Clossy, Mary Ann Butler, Adele Salva, Louisa Roger, Margaret George, Sarah Thompson, Eleanor Thompson, Martina Quinn, Fanny Jordan, Theresa Conway, and Julia Shirk. These sacred engagements were, no doubt, viewed by all those devoted souls, as so many obli-

gations to become the living images of Jesus Christ, since they fasten the soul of the religious to the amiable cross of her vocation. The vow of poverty inflicts a wound on the love of temporal things; the vow of chastity crucifies sensual life, and makes one participate in the angelic nature, as far as is possible with this mortal state; the vow of obedience wounds the baneful love of one's own liberty, and affixes the will to the divine will in the strict observance of the rules and vows. A soul, after this consecration, should be able to exclaim: "God forbid, that I should glory, save in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world!" She should never forget, that with Christ, she is nailed to the cross, since her vows rivet her to that sign of salvation. If she carefully observe her vows, she will attain a high degree of sanctity in this life, and merit to be ranked with the martyrs of her Jesus in eternity! Moreover, the Holy Fathers assure us, that the value of the entire gift she thus makes of herself to God by her sacred vows, is so great, that it stands in place of another baptism. Yet, what is this offering? She gives up a moment of liberty in this life, to

receive eternal and boundless liberty in the next. She renounces by her vow of obedience, a gift most fatal to her true happiness ; which she could hardly use without abusing ; she gives up the cares and solicitudes of this life, to live under the wings of divine love, and to enjoy the sweet fruits of peace and happiness, promised to such as cast their care upon the Lord. Her vow of poverty is one of detachment from all perishable things, but this poverty united to the poverty which Jesus Christ practised on earth, becomes a rich treasure. Ah ! is she not rich, who possesses God ? "Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

So, it was no doubt a subject of joy for these first sisters to think that as long as they might live, they would never have to follow their own will : they had sacrificed it to the Lord, and they renewed the sacrifice daily by yielding themselves to their holy rules, which were thenceforth to direct all their actions. This life enabled them to offer a continual immolation of themselves to the adorable will of God, which made their course on earth a kind of glorious martyrdom, which, if not as shining and illustrious as the effusion of one's blood for the love of God, was no less acceptable in the divine eyes. By prayer, they obtained grace

not to swerve from their constancy and fidelity in the service of their God and Saviour; and never to repine at any difficulty with which He was pleased to try them, but on the contrary, to find their happiness in all that tended to crucify nature and destroy the reign of sin in them.

In 1814 the first branch of the Sisters of Charity in the States was opened in Philadelphia. It was confided to the care of Sister Rose White, under the title of Sister Servant. It was a subject of great joy to the sisters, to have some among their number chosen thus early to serve the sad and destitute orphan! Philadelphia had for some time, it is true, made provisions for the orphan, but now a well organized asylum was about to be opened, and placed under the care of four sisters. Sister Rose had discharged the duties of assistant Mother, since the regular organization of the community in 1812. Sister Elizabeth was now chosen to take her place, but still continued her rounds to the different churches, as Sacristan. On her return, she would repair to the room where the good Mother Seton used to sit during the day either writing, or translating, but always welcoming her spiritual daughters. Mother always told her everything that had transpired during her absence, every permission that had

been asked, whether granted or not. No doubt, Sister Elizabeth in her great humility believed she would be released from the responsibilites of office very soon, as a new election was to take place in a few months: however, to her great regret she was chosen for a full term in 1813. She announced this news, so afflicting to her to Father Moranvillé and received the following reply: "My dear child, Father Dubois has remitted to me your two last letters. I feel no pain at all for what causes you so much uneasiness. I was informed of this long before you spoke of it to me. I knew it from the tender Mother [Seton] and the good Father [Dubois] also. How could I for a moment enter into your calculations and dwell as you do upon the idea and the fear of your inability to discharge the functions trusted to your hands? I bless the Lord for all these things, since His will with regard to you is marked out by the choice of your superiors. That you should not look for such places, that, when called to fill them you should feel yourself inadequate to the task, is but just and right; but, dear child, you have this long while made a surrender of your own will into the hands of your superiors. If they think proper to employ you in some other way, after humble

representations on your part, you have nothing to do but to obey, and cheerfully, fearing not for any humiliations which might be the result of your incapacity. Serve, then, as long as they will have you continue in that place, and retire when you are told to leave it, without any trouble or uneasiness of mind. Remember 'the child of obedience shall speak of victory.'"

In the sequel of this letter, the good Father reverts to his late interrupted visit at St. Joseph's, and we may not omit mentioning this signal and edifying instance of his devotedness to his flock. During the summer of 1814, he had been very sick, indeed. As early as the preceding spring he had sent Sister Elizabeth "The Christian's Guide to Heaven," and in a few lines at that same time had said: "You will ask leave from your tender Mother, Mrs. Seton, to accept it from the hands of your poor, almost dying father. No singing, no preaching, no high Mass. I may now say with more truth than ever, or rather with less fear of being belied, I am good for nothing, not even for suffering. Mr. Babade has spared nothing for the good of my congregation. Thus it is our dear Lord ever supplies such as trust in His mercy, with every thing that may be conducive to their spiritual welfare. Nothing can be wanting to us under

His loving protection. Let Him be ever praised, adored, and glorified! I thought of you often during my illness, something told me you were soliciting in my behalf. It is good for you who live in closer union with the Beloved to wish to be dissolved, to be no longer entangled with the dust of this world. You have been heard [in my regard], your good prayers and those of your community have been heard; a time of reprieve is granted me. God is gracious to me: He sends me back for some time more, expecting I will bring forth more fruit than before." His health continued in so precarious a state, however, that towards Autumn he went on a visit to Emmittsburg, to recruit his exhausted frame, while his mind was anticipating the pleasure of luxuriating in the atmosphere of piety and holy friendship shed around them by his cherished friends at Mount St. Mary's and St. Joseph's. He had but just arrived at the end of his journey, when a report reached him that Baltimore was threatened by the approach of an English fleet. Though his limbs were swollen with disease, he set out instantly on horseback for Baltimore, so as not to be absent from his flock in the hour of danger. Referring to his unexpected departure in his letter, he says: "I was hurried away from your blessed soliitude un-

expectedly. I had promised myself to see you on many occasions during my stay at Emmittsburg. God has ordained it otherwise, let His will be done.*

Though so little entitled to your regard, one thing seems to be in my favor and to plead for me, which is, my sincere and devoted affection for you: an affection which is truly paternal, having begotten you to our dear Lord, having been the poor instrument of the happiness you enjoy. Pray for me dear, and first-born child."†

Soon after this, death having taken away the mistress of novices, "who was a holy and well informed woman," Sister Elizabeth was appointed to fill her place. It may be well to remark here that the Mother Superior of the Sisters of Charity, has always three officers who aid her in the government of the community, viz: the Assistant Mother, the Treasurer, and the Procuratrix. These form, with the ecclesiastical Superior and the Mother, the council of the community. The ecclesiastical Superior is appointed by the Most Rev. Archbishop or

* "We are still under some apprehensions," he said in this letter, "that the enemy will try once more the carrying of this place. We have been happy enough to resist the first time: I hope the Lord who has protected us so far, will not permit the land of Mary to fall a prey to captors."

† Sister Elizabeth was the first he ever sent to religion.

Bishop, in whose diocese the Mother House is; the other officers are chosen by the suffrages of the sisters. It is so arranged that the triennial election for different officers should not cause a complete change—the terms of office for the mother and her assistant expire at different periods, those of the Treasurer and Procuratrix at the same time. There is always a sister appointed by the council to take charge of the religious training of the novices. This duty does not necessarily appertain to any of the aforesaid officers; a private sister may be chosen as mistress of novices. It is, of course, one of the most responsible posts in the community. St. Vincent hesitates not to say that this sister should be an angel, for he expected the young sisters to be so fortified in their novitiate against the dangers of the world, that they would stand like "*so many rocks* against its seductive snares;" and, says the learned Ansart, "he never doubted for a moment but that they would, and God has granted it to his prayers."* Hence, then, the necessity of the young aspirants being well trained in the ways of virtue.

Sister Elizabeth possessed too high an idea of the exalted nature of her holy vocation, as a

* L'esprit de St. Vincent de Paul.

Sister of Charity, not to tremble on assuming a post fraught with so much, bearing on the vital interests of the community so dear to her. Every Sister of Charity must feel that her own perfection must be the latent spring of all her exertions. Hence, the obligation of joining the exercises of an interior and spiritual life to her exterior employments. She must learn that holy art taught St. Catharine of Sienna by the Holy Ghost Himself, of building a solitude in her heart, where she may live alone to God, amidst the bustle of exterior duties. The holy scripture tells us: "All the beauty of the king's daughter is within," thus, plainly indicating the excellence of the interior life led by Mary, to whom the Church applies these words. Doubt less, the Blessed Virgin, after her divine Son, is the most perfect model of this life, yet, she did not live in a cloister, but in the world in which she led a holy, but laborious life. Her life was holy, because she was faithful to grace, and she was faithful to grace, because she possessed the interior life. By means of this interior life a soul leaves this "valley of tears," takes wing like the dove, and flies to heaven in order to converse with the holy angels. She can say with the Apostle, that her conversation is entirely in heaven; her life is no longer a natural, human

life, but supernatural; we might rather say divine. The Apostle had attained to this exalted state when he said: "I live, now, not I, but Christ liveth in me." Such a daughter of charity, entertains no earthly thoughts; her thoughts, her desires are all heavenly, and while she labors and converses on earth, her heart reposes in God, who is the centre of all her affections. The Rev. Father Bruté drew the following portraiture of what should be the interior life of a daughter of charity amidst the hurry and bustle of the exterior world.

"'I will lead her into solitude and speak to her heart.' With Him I entered this solitude, in the most retired part of His desert and under the shade of lofty trees, sat on the bank of a pure sheet of water,—this little lake so clear, reflected heaven itself,—and when the sun appeared over it for a moment the eye could no more bear its dazzling light,—thus, methinks, is the heart of a Sister of Charity in Communion. It may be sometimes unconscious of the light and brightness, yet, like the peace of evening, it remains quiet in the shade, the sorrowful note of the bird of night, not taking from its pleasing serenity, for our Jesus is not in the whirlwind or tempest, but in the light, still breeze. Should a momentary

gust of wind arise and sweep over its surface the calm of the little lake is soon restored. Because concealed from the profane eyes of the world, it draws its light and warmth from the sunbeams of the sun of Justice in humility, recollection, and peace. The empire of recollection is the strength of virtue, as agitation and commotion are the strength of passion. Recollection is like the banks of the little lake which protect its waters so that if, on a sudden its surface is ruffled, or a pebble is cast into its bosom, calm is soon restored—the wound quickly closes, and circles of peace move gently round where it fell. Cherish this holy peacefulness; it is the nurse of all graces; it preserves the grace of recollection, which, in its turn, preserves the little lake in its placid state, so that it reflects the azure heavens above. Yes, Heaven is pictured in the heart wherein peace and recollection reign, and the Holy Spirit takes up His permanent dwelling therein."

Sister Elizabeth viewed in perspective the various duties of her onerous charge which were, as we have seen, of a character to dismay the most courageous soul. To discern the inclinations of souls whose secret impulses are known to God alone, to spiritualize persons of

a worldly mind, and to direct souls in the narrow, but secure way of religious perfection, is an arduous task indeed, and, to perform it, a person stands greatly in need of help from on high. We may judge how perfect were the lessons given by the holy Sister Elizabeth to those intrusted to her care, by the good example she invariably gave of every virtue. Example speaks louder than precept, we are told, but how powerful the effect when both are united! Her novices no doubt found as much to edify them in her words as in her actions. Father Moranvillé on hearing from her, of her new duty, thus addressed her on the subject:* "How good the Lord is to have multiplied thus your cares and your occupations! You have thereby, many occasions of exercising yourself in all the virtues of your profession. You sink not under the burden, I am sure, but you only distrust your own ability, and in this, you do right. Were you to feel your incapacity less, you would not answer the views of Him who will have us to depend on Himself alone, when we do our best for the good of others. Always forget yourself, to mind only Him, to abandon yourself to His divine conduct, and

---

*April 6, 1815.

He will guide your steps, and give you that portion of light necessary to discharge your trust. What pleases me most in all this, is to find you always the same, cheerful and free from all perplexities in your mind. The duties marked out to us by the will of our superiors ought always to be to us, a source of satisfaction, never of troubles. If it happen we should mistake, and deviate from their intentions, the fault must turn to our spiritual improvement by making us still more sensible of our nothingness. How well it is with us, when we are only moved by considerations which answer every case and every difficulty. No, my dear child, I never forget you in my poor addresses to God; I even beg God to hear me on account, and for the sake of His more faithful servants." Later, by a few months, * he says to her: "You have been often present with me, and at the most interesting hour of the great sacrifice. I often besought our Lord to form His loving child to His own liking, to make her a living copy of Himself, to purify her in the ardors of His charity, to impart to her a generous and ready will to undertake and execute whatever He might

* June 5, 1815.

demand of her. Oh! the sweet and amiable Sovereign Who, in laying injunctions on us knows how to make them so easy, so light, and of so many comforts productive." "I rejoice,"* he says again, dear child, at the many blessings the Lord has provided for your advancement in His ways! A retreat—oh! what a favor! To have some stated days wholly employed in examining how your accounts stand with the Sovereign Judge, who can knock every moment at our door; in making a review of all the talents received; in searching how they have been improved; in descending with the light of faith into the very recesses of your heart; in bringing to light so many imperfections which escape our frailty even in the exercise of our most holy employments; in striking at the very root of all our failings; in devising a new plan of life and how to be more fervent and more diligent in the management of spiritual favors for the time to come. You have not surely forgotten your poor father in those twelve days when heavenly showers were more frequent, when the soul is better prepared for them; I have no fear of it, and feel a particular satisfaction in testifying my gratitude to you, for your

* August 9, 1815.

charitable remembrance. I know, also, the good Mother [Seton's] heart, that in her absorbed recollections in the presence of her Beloved, she has more than once entreated Him to turn His merciful eyes on me and my dear flock."

CHAPTER VII.

Sister Elizabeth's Humility and Fervor—She is Re-elected Assistant Mother—Letters of Father Moranvillé.

TIME passes rapidly to the inmates of religious houses, where every moment and hour is fully employed in the meritorious duties enjoined by holy obedience. It hangs heavily upon those only, who know not how to turn this inestimable blessing to advantage. The recurrence of the different festivals that mark the passing year keeps the recollected, religious soul, constantly intent upon that "bright day of eternity, which knows no night, a day always joyful, always secure and never changing its state for the contrary." Such lively sentiments of faith are awakened by the devout celebration of these feasts in holy souls, that new impressions of grace are constantly received. Hence, in their letters of friendly correspondence, we always find mention of these times of devotion. This is eminently true of Father Moranvillé, whose heart seemed to be in such a constant state of jubilee, that these feasts but made it overflow with torrents of delight. "How many moving mysteries we

have lately celebrated," said he, on one occasion, to Sister Elizabeth in a letter written soon after Christmas; "I doubt not, dear child, but you have been often sensibly, feelingly, affected at the consideration of them. It was surely a delight for your soul to contemplate your Eternal Lover in that interesting state of weakness and infancy which He chose for our sake. You have mingled your tears with His, seeing that by those first sufferings He engaged Himself to endure greater ones for the atonement of our sins. You have surely often accompanied the shepherds and the wise men in their journey to Bethlehem, and joined them in their profound adoration and grateful thanks to this divine Infant. You will now preserve to the best of your power the blessed fruits of these solemnities, and grow with Jesus in wisdom and grace before your God, in company with your associates. Nothing is wanting to you for the development of these favors in your heart,—great examples, moving exhortations, sacraments, all manner of helps. Oh! with how much reason do you esteem your condition happy. Can there be anything more desirable than to be locked up, as it were, in the very embraces of religion? '*He hath not done* in like manner to every one, and His

MOST REV. JOHN HUGHES,
First Archbishop of New York.

judgments He hath not made *manifest* to them.' Be thankful, eternally thankful to God, for having separated you from a world of Herods, of persecutors of Jesus Christ, the enemies of his humiliations, poverty and sufferings. Walk by the light of His example, that His blessed image may be expressed in you. *Vivat* Jesus!"*

In the daily routine of the religious life, how many occasions present themselves, of laying up treasures of merit, which only the eye of faith truly appreciates. Sister Elizabeth early formed the habit of thanking God each morning for having giving her another day to labor for Him. Yet, in her humility, she feared, sometimes, to be wanting in that interior spirit, which gives merit to our exterior employments, by sanctifying them. God stands not in need of our good works, but in His goodness, He is pleased to accept the most trivial action, if performed in His honor. "Amen, I say to you, not even a cup of cold water given in My name shall go without its reward." The all-important

---

* These beautiful letters are transcribed to manifest to all who have had the happiness of knowing good Mother Elizabeth the fact, that she never permitted a single opportunity of improvement to pass by unused.

thing, then, is to keep the eye of the soul ever directed to God. Happily, Sister Elizabeth knew well that as the body without the spirit is dead, so, also, the exterior action unless animated and exalted by interior sentiments of religion is of no avail before God, and is as a dead work in His sight. She fully entered into the feelings of her holy monitor* who said: "Poor travellers, that we are, we are continually hastening on to a fixed and unchangeable term. We stand in great need of provision for it. Each day of our journey offers us a new supply, and fresh motives to keep up our fervor. Those [mysteries of religion] we here commemorate successively, will be in the Heavenly abode, the constant object of our admiration, love and gratitude. Oh! when shall this happy day come! No distractions then, no fears, no alarms to disturb one's mind. Lost, happily lost, in the overflowing source of all beauty, ever ravishing, we shall be alive to the most exquisite feelings. The mind, the heart, this poor lump of clay, every part of ourselves, will have its proper enjoyment. Now, on the eve of this great bliss, how short the day that separates us from it! Let us not, then, mind much the difficulties of

* Father Moranvillé.

the way, they cannot but be eased by the thought of such a great reward. The Hand of the Elect to whose likeness we must be formed, sweetens the labor by His unction and by His example. Oh! the inexpressible comfort to suffer for Him and along with Him! We know that the reward will be proportioned to our resignation and cheerfulness under the weight of our daily tribulations. When shall we glory in them? My responsibility, my dear child, frightens me very often. You sometimes find your own very great: but how consoling it must be to you to deal with fervent souls, souls always open and ready to receive your maternal admonitions. It seems to me that all my moments are taken up, though I do very little indeed. I am ashamed of myself: days are revolving upon days, and at the end of them when I bring myself to account, I always find some great interval passed in doing nothing to the purpose. I hope you are always well both in spirit and body: that you command all your affairs, multiplied as they may be, and preserve in the midst of your occupations, the spirit of Mary, giving an attentive ear to what the beloved says within the interior. Blessed lot, indeed, by which we anticipate in some measure, the life to come, and enjoy here on earth the

presence of Him whom we hope to see face to face in a little while. For what is the time of our stay here? Very short, indeed, since a thousand years in the sight of the Eternal, is as yesterday. The Resurrection of our Lord, gives us great motives continually to aspire after the bliss promised. His Ascension reminds us of the beautiful place He is gone to prepare for us, and teaches us to mount up with Him, by directing to Him, all our desires and affections. Now to work in us these holy dispositions the divine Spirit offers us His help and assistance. He is promised to us as well as to the disciples. Being already, my dear child, in continual retirement, you have only to imitate them in your fervent aspirations to Him, and in the practice of the good works proper to your condition."

In 1817, as we have noted, Sister Elizabeth was re-elected Assistant Mother. Mother Seton's health was not at all good, therefore, the duties of her assistant, were many. Father Moranvillé learned her re-election from the Rev. Superior, Father Dubois, and wrote her the following lines,* well calculated to raise her courage. "My dear child, your good Father

---

* August 7, 1817.

(Dubois) is now with me. He said his Mass this morning at St. Patrick's, took his breakfast with your old Father, and is now at the foot of the sanctuary to say some part of his office. I avail myself of the interval to converse with you a moment. I received your letter with great satisfaction ; it affords me great pleasure, indeed, you cannot doubt it, to receive these tokens of your grateful remembrance, and if your occupations were not so multiplied, I would desire you to renew them oftener. 'Tis true, I am not very exact in answering them ; without forgetting you, many circumstances often deprive me of doing what I have so much at heart. I am told, you were re-elected for your office of assistant. This was a proof, you had done your best before. Though you might wish to be forgotten, and to have only to fulfil the common duties of a sister, yet it is good, advantageous for you that you should not be gratified in this. Oh ! bear well the yoke, with the same submission and confidence as you have done, and God will enable you to go through all the difficulties, and to make them an increase of merit in His divine sight. You approach Him so often at the altar, at His sacred table, in your various communications with Him, He will direct you and make everything light to you." In 1818

the good Mother Seton had a very severe attack of sickness from which she never perfectly recovered. Sister Elizabeth was advised not to leave her to her own management, as it was feared she always exerted herself more than her strength permitted, and to endeavor to moderate her ardor. Of course, these circumstances served to increase Sister Elizabeth's cares but happily she know how "to pass through many cares as it were without care, not after the manner of an indolent person, but by a certain prerogative of a free mind." Some time elapsed, however, without her having leisure, probably, to address the good Father who was ever her angel conductor. He reproached her gently just after St. Elizabeth's Feast, 19th of November, 1818, saying to her: "To what are we come? No letter, not the least word from St. Joseph's Valley this long while!—All is silent around. You are within the sphere of your daily and holy employments, all intent in doing what the sovereign Will points out to you, by the rules of the house, and by the orders of your superiors. You have the opportunity of renewing frequently the sacrifice of your liberty, of your feelings, of your taste, inclinations, etc., and of thus laying up a great store of merit continually in the eyes of that heavenly Spouse Who keeps

a good account of every sigh, of every affection, of every step for His sake. How gracious and liberal He is to those, who, after having left everything, seek Him alone, in the holy exercises of retirement! Yesterday was for you a most glorious day. How fervently you must have solicited the favor, the protection of your illustrious patroness, that great saint, whose virtues were no less wonderful in the state of prosperity, than in that of adversity. Her perfect calm and heartful joy under the most grievous and uncommon afflictions, did they not make her the wonder of her age? She is now reaping all the fruit of her humiliations, of her sacrifices. The time of trial was short, but the reward will be forever! That which we do, in comparison with those generous souls, is little, but little as it is, when done for the love of our Lord, and in union with all He has done Himself, it becomes great, immortal, and the source of never ending devotion, charity and humility, and turns into the most inestimable treasure of merit, the least action which it animates. Abide by that spirit, my dear child, that your life may be full. I have not forgotten you on your Saint's day, nor the good mother who bears the same name. I heartily joined you both in your supplications to St. Elizabeth,

and I begged for you, and for poor me, a small share in her holy Spirit. To-morrow [the 21st]* will also be a great day for you; you will offer to your dear Lord, through the hands of Mary, that tribute and sacrifice of your whole self which has long been accepted by Him. Ask for me, a spirit of fervor, regularity and zeal, so necessary to make my own consecration acceptable in the sight of our Beloved. You have always the blessing and good wishes of your loving Father. You cannot doubt, you are his joy and comfort, though at a great distance from him. Are you not, in some manner, his first born in our Lord? I might say with the Apostle: "*I have espoused you to one husband*, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." How often do I cast the eyes of my soul towards the mountain, and solicit the God of mercy to look favorably upon me, in behalf of His servants. I hope that my dear child, and her tender Mother [Seton] never forget me in the midst of their multiplied functions, and above all, in their frequent communications with the Beloved. Oh! the safe harbor you are in, whilst poor we are exposed to all the storms of a raging ocean. Recom-

---

* Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

mend me particularly to our Lord's loving Mother during the octave of that glorious solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. I will pray with you and for you, in the Heart of our blessed Lord."

In the beginning of the New Year, the good Father wrote to Sister Elizabeth rallying her on her humble fears about having too much of the spirit of Martha amid her many duties. Every word of this letter is a beautiful lesson: "A new year has begun, a new favor with so many others is bestowed upon us. The Lord treats us indeed, with great mercy. How many have been cut off who had as fair a prospect to live longer as we have. Oh! if we husband well every grace, every moment of this new year, what a source of comfort it will be for us in the last hour! As this may be the last, we ought to consider it in this point of view; and then all duties will be well fulfilled, and all blessings well improved. But, dear child, you are grown familiar with this thought: you have this long while accustomed yourself to look upon each day and each hour, as though you were to render your account at their expiration. You will continue to do so, I hope, till the appointed moment of dissolution arrives. You are, you say, a poor Martha solicitous about many

things: aspire upon all occasions to be like unto her who is spoken of* by the Evangelist: Jesus loved Martha. Oh! what a blessing to be the object of Jesus' affection! What would you not readily sacrifice for it? Do only what He requires of you every day of your life; do it with fervor, and according to your ability, and you will be the object of His predilection. When we have done all that we can do, and with as much fidelity as we are able, what ought we to say? '*We are unprofitable servants.*' Neither the power, nor even the will of doing what we are commanded to do belongs to us—it is the effect of a heavenly assistance. Poor we! we can do nothing of ourselves—it is not surprising that we should so often feel our inability. But we must never be dejected by this: the more our duties are multiplied, the greater should be our confidence in Him who strengthens us. It is He who lays the charge upon our weak shoulders, let us creep along with alacrity. To look to the moment when we shall be free from the burden, would be to manifest a desire perhaps contrary to His own pleasure. We are nothing, He knows it better than we and He never wants great instruments to work

* In these quotations we leave the Father's own expressive words always unchanged, even though they may appear gallicisms.

The weakest of all, and such as consider themselves so, are, in His hands, fit for every purpose. The essential point is to depend on Him alone. Lift up your eyes to Him, and behold; *(He that keepeth Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep.)* Our help is His Name. I was very happy indeed to hear that our beloved Agnes is at last received into the number of our dear sisters. The good child will, I hope, feel more and more the happiness of such a vocation. Having chosen on Christmas day, the portion of a Saviour, born in poverty, sufferings and humiliations, she must now continually look to His divine example, to delineate them in her conduct. You, and all your sisters will be her guides in that blessed way."

CHAPTER VIII.

Marriage of Elizabeth's Sister—Expiration of the Term of Office of Sister Elizabeth as Assistant Mother—She still Remains Mistress of Novices—Father Moranvillé's Letter Concerning a Postulant—Sister Elizabeth sent to Philadelphia—Resemblance between Mother Seton and Sister Elizabeth.

SISTER Elizabeth's sister, Susanna, having been received into the Church, as we have said, on Easter Monday, 1810, made her first Communion on Low Sunday of the same year. So fervent was she, that whilst reading the Thanksgiving prayers aloud for her happy companions, she was often obliged to stop by the sighs of her burning devotion,* and she excited the same feelings in many who heard her. She was for some time doubtful about her vocation, and seemed much attracted to the religious life.

Father Moranvillé thus spoke of her to Sister Elizabeth: "I have not seen Susanna, except in the tribunal: I know not whether she will finally turn to the world, or give herself to Him, Who has been so good to her from the beginning. Whenever I find the opportunity of manifesting my sentiments to her, I always endeavor to inspire her with a love of preference for the

* Father Moranvillé's letter, May 10, 1810.

Spouse of virgins. I depict to her, as well as I can, the happiness of that state, the many dangers, solicitudes and temptations from which it preserves us, the comforts it affords those who deny themselves in all things. There is no question about a life of retirement as yet, we leave to our God the right which solely belongs to Him, to mark out to us the way in which He would have her to walk. If she were happy enough to devote her liberty, her life, her whole being to Him, after unequivocal marks that God calls her to that blessed state, we could not forbear praising His mercies upon her. No doubt you will support by your fervent prayers, joined with her own, what grace is unfolding in her heart every day. Next Ascension she will renew her Communion,* and be admitted to the confraternity of the scapular. With the help and assistance of the Mother of purity, and of all virtues, she cannot but improve in the ways of the Lord, and strengthen herself more and more, in the contempt of the world and hatred of herself."

The good Father evidently made up his mind later, that this dear child, "who seemed to promise so much at her very entrance into the fold of

* It is a pious French custom, and one most salutary in its effects, to have children go through the same preparatory exercises for the second Communion as for the first.

our blessed Lord," had a religious vocation. In 1812, however, he received information from Sister Elizabeth of the intended marriage of Susanna. In his great prudence, Father Moranvillé thus spoke of Susanna's approaching marriage with Dr. M——— of Baltimore. "All are not called to live a single life." '*All receive not the word*,' says our Blessed Lord, '*but they to whom it is given.*' May Susanna find in this condition, what may promote her spiritual and temporal welfare. The manner in which God had called her to the knowledge of His saving faith, the many blessings and particular favors He seemed to confer upon her sometimes after that happy call, and some other circumstances induced me, for some time, to believe that she was not destined for the world. She has surely, I have no doubt of it, consulted His blessed will, but I fear she has been rather too hasty in her determination. When they request me to unite them, I will not show the least opposition. Our hearts are in the hands of God; He can move them whichever way He pleases. Let us recommend them both earnestly to Him, and beg of Him, that they should not act contrary to His blessed will." Later, and after the marriage, he says: "Our poor Susanna struggles now with the world: has she a great share in its happiness? I do not know, but every time I see her, and it is seldom indeed, I feel

a kind of compassion for her. Something tells me, that had she to begin again, she might make the better choice. Let us pray for her, her dangers are now doubled: if her courage and strength are not, how miserable she must be." He repeatedly speaks of her regular approach to the sacraments and of her husband's also. In 1815, he said: "I have seen your sister. My heart is always broken when I see her—she never complains, but I cannot forbear pitying her. I hope she may not yet regret not having followed my counsels. Oh! how she is changed in her countenance! she looked once as fair as an angel, and now her complexion is faded, and her eyes dim with melancholy. Both have received at the late solemnity" [Corpus Christi]. Our Lord blessed the family of this dear sister, in a wonderful way, no doubt, through her own and Sister Elizabeth's fervent prayers, and those of good Father Moranvillé. Out of a large family of children, not one has proved unfaithful to the duties of religion.

Mother Seton's health continued in a very precarious state as we have said from her very severe attack of illness in 1818. "She was always suffering but always cheerful in her resignation." She had already borne many trials with patience and resignation, for she felt the blessed will of God must be done, that God is so just,

so wise, so merciful, that it is consoling to live under His direction and appointmemt. She knew well the necessity of losing our will in His, by making His will the rule of our affections and actions. And, in the words of the good Father Moranvillé, "how many anxieties, solicitudes, and painful cases, should we not avoid by being thus disposed at all times?"

In the year 1820, Sister Elizabeth's second term of office as assistant mother expired, and she was allowed to resume the place so dear to her, that of a private sister. Father Moranvillé did not share her delight: "You are, do you say, to be restored to your former state. Is this the case? I thought that the same person might be re-elected for the same office: if your rules do not permit it, very well; it is indeed, safer to obey than to command. The responsibility is less; yet, I must say it, the merit is greater on the other side, when things are managed according to order. Any place soever we are called to, we must always set before us the great standard of perfection, the blessed will of God. With that purity of intention, if we commit some oversights, it is no fault in the sight of Him, Who is indulgence itself, and Who knows our inability. The retrospect of the last year does not satisfy your mind—but are

you not too greedy? No, we never do all the good, which, with more vigilence and attention to grace, we might do. Were we even so happy as to go so far, we ought still to look upon ourselves as unprofitable servants. It is God alone who gives the will and the power. He only asks for our correspondence. Oh! let it be always full and entire. To the sacrifice of our own will, and to our following Him steadily, He has attached the choicest favors. Blessed state of captivity! which will bring us to the true liberty of God's children, and insure to us their inheritance. Have, or rather ask, for that good spirit.

Let every step, every action of yours, have nothing of your own will,—to this disposition is promised the hundred fold even in this life."

Sister Elizabeth was still mistress of novices, hence in this same letter the good Father says: "I am pleased, and very much pleased indeed to hear my child Agnes* tries her best, and emulates in zeal and fervor, her good sisters and associates. She must grow up every day, in these holy dispositions, and become a great proficient in the love of her Beloved. Oh! He counts up all that she does for His divine sake, and has prepared a rich crown for her." A young

---

*A postulant that Father Moranvillé had sent to St. Joseph's.

person who had, it seems a very quick unrestrained temper, had been strongly recommended to the council at St. Joseph's by Father Moranvillé. This was known at the Valley, and Sister Elizabeth made some demur about receiving her. To this he made the following earnest reply: "You have nothing to fear, from what you have told me, with regard to the person who seems to persevere in asking a place among you. I was pretty well aware of this her disposition, and thought at the same time, she had been more cautious since some time. We have every one of us failings, and it often happens, we know ourselves less than others do. Happy are we, when, being made sensible of faults, we try our best to correct them. I think this person might be brought to a better sense, had she some excellent and inexorable monitor, who would then and there, represent to her the impropriety of such a disposition. When each one of our actions is particularly watched, we are apt to become more circumspect, and the habit of restraining ourselves in this or any other point, is acquired by degrees: thus, virtue is raised upon the ruins of our corrupt nature, and by continual and generous efforts, it gets the better of former inclinations. If to admit a person of her age and

condition be not a breach of your rules, I would still recommend her to your notice, when you would think it a proper time to speak in her favor ; she would not be irrevocably admitted, as at first a time of probation is required of every one. If at the expiration of that time, the subject is unfit for the institution, she is dismissed. Without some trial of the kind, it is sometimes very difficult, with regard to some persons, to know whether they are called by God, or not, to such a state of life. It is for this reason, that a novitiate always precedes the admission. I am very much pleased to hear that my dear Agnes walks diligently in all the duties of her most enviable situation. The further she advances, the greater will be her comfort. God lavishes Himself on those that are generous and liberal. Dear Agnes give up all, and the unction of grace will make you regret you cannot give more. Nothing is wanting to her who has the Lord for her portion and inheritance.

"I wish you all the blessings of the Spouse, I mean the Bridegroom."

In the latter part of 1820, Sister Elizabeth was appointed sister servant of St. Joseph's Asylum in Philadelphia. On the eve of her departure from Emmittsburg, her beloved novices entreated her to pass the recreation

with them, and, ever forgetful of self, she did so. After it was over, Mother Seton met her as she was retiring from the chapel, and embracing her, said: "Your last evening at home, and you did not pass it with poor Mother." Then, gently drawing her into her room, they sat down, and passed almost the entire night, in devout converse on the things of God. These holy souls were united in a very close friendship, and used to deposit in each other's hearts the holy promptings from above. On one occasion, many long years afterwards, some one remarked in Mother Elizabeth's presence, that Mother Seton had contemplated a union with the French sisterhood before her death. "No," said Mother Elizabeth; "had she *even thought of it*, she would have told me, *for she never concealed anything from me.*"

There was a striking resemblance between Mother Seton and Sister Elizabeth,—the one was constantly mistaken for the other, and strangers on seeing both thought they were own sisters. On one occasion, this remarkable resemblance gave rise to quite an interesting little incident. Mother Seton's sister went to St. Joseph's on a visit. On her arrival, Sister Elizabeth opened the door for her, and never having seen her before, greeted her as she would naturally greet one

who was a perfect stranger to her, and was not of course, as warm as Mother Seton would have been. The lady, bewildered at meeting so cold a reception from her own sister, as she thought, was unable to suppress her feelings and burst into tears. Mother Seton, happening to pass by, quickly recognized her sister, and made up for what had appeared to the visitor an unaccountable degree of formality.

CHAPTER IX.

Opening of the First Mission in New York—Letter of Mother Seton to Sister Elizabeth—Death of Mother Seton.

We have already remarked that Sister Rose White went to Philadelphia, in 1814, to take charge of the first branch of the Sisters of Charity in the United States. Although charged with the asylum, she was still a most assiduous visitor of the sick. The Right Rev. Bishop Connolly of New York, had applied as early as the year 1817, to his future successor, the Rev. John Dubois, then President of Mount St. Mary's, and Superior-General of the Sisters of Charity at Emmittsburg, Maryland, to obtain the services of some sisters to take charge of the orphan asylum in New York. The mission was confided to Sister Rose White, whose zeal and piety had already contributed to the success of the orphan asylum in Philadelphia, and qualified her for undertaking an institution of the same kind in the city of New York. Accompanied by two sisters, she set out for New York, June 20, 1817. On September 13, 1820, only a few months before Mother Seton died, Sister Elizabeth left St. Joseph's to take charge of the Asylum which Sister Rose had so happily founded in Philadelphia. This we learn from a letter she wrote to

sister Elizabeth when she had partially recovered. This letter was written but a short time before her death, and we insert the greater portion of it, knowing how dear anything pertaining to the revered writer is, not only to the sisters, but to all catholics of the United States.

ST. JOSEPH'S, EMMITTSBURG,
October 25, 1820.

"Dearest old partner of my cares and bearer of my burdens!

"I would tell you that just after you left us, our good superior sent for me to go out among the carpenters. I had to climb a pile of boards, and as I was not very well, and the wind very sharp, the exposure threw me into a fever. The superior came in haste to anoint me, and the next Sunday Mr. Bruté began the, 'Depart Christian soul.' I was struck at the sound of those impressive words. What does it mean? said I to myself. But I placed myself in the hands of God and our dear Mother, and in a few minutes was fast asleep. The getting well is very slow, but returning life finds me not slow to sin. . . . . It soon pleased God, I could see to all things without letting them go out of their old track. It seems the (Rev.) Superior went to the infirmary unexpectedly the other day, and heard some talking there. He asked Sister Benedicta, if silence was not to be observed there? He wrote

in very large letters: 'Silence here, at all times as below, when not in recreation. No one can come to the infirmary without permission.' You never saw such a change as it has made.

"You speak of writing home to the sisters, it would be the delight of my heart, my own child. Write as often as you can. One thing I beg of you when you write to me, scribble without care. Say much, and never mind how it is written. Give love to all for me. . . . . .

"I believe I have told you all,

"Your own Mother, E. A. SETON.

P. S. It has taken me nearly all day to write this letter, owing to my difficulty of respiration."

Father Bruté says of Mother Seton after her recovery: "She seemed for a time partially restored on receiving Extreme Unction. She was able to sit up again, on her little stool near the fire, either writing or translating conferences for her daughters."

Mother was suffering, but with that cheerful resignation which made each moment of trial, a new gem for her crown. Father Bruté says in his manuscript that, her last charge to the community as Mother was: "To love one another as Sisters of Charity, to love the Church, to love the Rules." She gave this

charge just after she had had the consolation of receiving Extreme Unction a second time. Father Bruté administered it, and speaking of her happy death says: "She died in full peace and love on the Fourth of January, 1821,* having sent before her, her two sisters and her two daughters†, and nearly thirty of the first

---

*The Sisters of Charity always receive Holy Communion on the anniversary of Mother Seton's death, and offer it in suffrage for the repose of her soul, well persuaded their good Mother will not forget them on that day, though she may not stand in need of their prayers.

† Her eldest daughter, Anne Maria, entered the sisterhood and received the religious name of Annina. The following letter addressed to her by the Superior General, Father Dubourg is well worth perusing. It is dated 1809.

"My Dear and Every Day Dear Child.

"What a joy you have infused into my soul by your dear letter! Obedience has showed itself to you in its proper shape and with its salutary, or, as I may rather say, heavenly charm and attractions. Oh! my dear child, you have at length arrived at the door of true happiness, you are coming to the safe harbor of salvation. Oh yes, be an obedient child, a child of obedience, and you may mock all the hellish powers, for God Himself assures you that will bring great and many victories. For, if once, you are a child of obedience, if you once offer to God the sacrifice of your own will in the hands of your superiors, of your Father and Mother in Christ Jesus, then I assure in the name of Him, Whom I have the honor to represent, that you are a true living member of the obedient Jesus. Then I assure you, you will share in our overflowing joys, then yours will be the precious peace promised to men of good will. You may trust to the experience of an old veteran in Jesus' militia. The more I have had the happiness of sacrificing my own private will, judgment, and inclinations, to those of my superiors, the more I have enjoyed the sweet peace and joy, which is here below, a foretaste of the happiness reserved for us above. The gift. the sweet gift of tears, in which my soul is melting these ten years, has been I,

Sisters, with every best mark of their eternal happiness, She left a religious family fully resolved to follow the holy example of their sainted predecessors, in the way of grace and fidelity." Addressing the community, the good Father goes on to say: "May all bear in mind

---

understand, the reward of the most generous sacrifice I ever made of my own judgment and will to those of my superiors, of which I may tell you in our next conference. Experience has already fully taught you, that our peace and happiness, ought not to depend on our feelings, which are so changeable, so variable. And now let faith teach and persuade you that there cannot be any danger, and that safety consists only in perfect submission and obedience. Mankind were lost by the disobedience of Adam, and were recovered only by the obedience of Jesus Christ, the second Adam. By his generous obedience, Abraham was justified, and deserved to be the father of all the faithful. Obedience has been at all times, the shield and palladium of all the elect of God. Let it be your safety, for I am persuaded you are one of them. Let your every step be regulated and sanctified by obedience, and every step of yours will be meritorious of eternal life, happiness, and glory. Understand it is the renouncing of our own judgment and of our own will, which constitutes the self-denial so much commended and enforced by our divine Master, as the essential complement and perfection of Christian virtue, and an indispensable requisite for eternal salvation. Understand that such a sacrifice, even when most perfectly made on our part, and considered as the highest pitch of perfection that can be attained by human weakness, is but exact justice, and is even a very inadequate return for what we have first received from Him, who when He owed nothing to us, but anger, wrath and punishment, has deigned to sacrifice himself entirely for us, and has made himself obedient unto death, and unto the death of the cross. When we contemplate the generosity of such a sacrifice of our divine Redeemer, when we duly weigh, Who He was, and who we were, and consider what He has done for us, Oh! dear child! can we set bounds to our sacrifices, can we keep anything in reserve, refusing to give it to Him,

The Catholic
Theological Union
LIBRARY
Chicago, Ill.

and follow the resolution to love God above all things, to prefer Him under all trials and temptations, to seek but His glory and the good of souls, to cherish particularly the care of youth, the relief of the poor and sick, the works of charity of every kind which Providence will

---

to sacrifice it to Him? We have only to regret that our poverty, misery and wretchedness, leave us so little to give in return, and that this very little, is still so degraded, so corrupted, so unworthy of being offered. Then to make up for our deficiency, we lose ourselves in Jesus, who lives in us, and He fills up the void and deficiency. We renounce with Him and in Him, worldly goods and property, then the poverty of Jesus our chief, dignifies the poverty of us, His members. With Him, and in Him, we renounce every sensual pleasure and gratification of the flesh, and then, the mortification of Jesus, is made manifest in our body, by the chaste life we live and profess in Him and with Him. We pledge ourselves never to do our own will or what pleases us, but invariably the will of God, and what is most contrary and repugnant to the unruly desires of our corrupt nature; and then the obedience of Jesus, which has freed mankind in general from the degrading slavery of sin and hell, frees us from the tyranny of satan, and from the confusion and anarchy of our own passions, and, raising us to the freedom and liberty of the children of God, secures to us an incontrovertible right to rank among the heirs of His kingdom and glory. Nay, such a renouncing of our own will binds the will of God to our own. Oh! if such is the excellence and merit of obedience, let it be perfect and constant, without any variation, or reserve! Let the most sincere obedience to revelation and faith sanctify our reason and understanding! Let the most exact observance of the Divine commandments and precepts or ordinances of His Church together with unrelenting readiness to obey the inspirations of divine grace and to submit in everything to the will of our superiors, whoever they may be, sanctify our soul with all its faculties. When we meet again we will enter into details; in the meanwhile, the peace of the Lord be with you forever.

God bless my dear Anna, and make her the most obedient child."

offer them, to cultivate their interior grace most faithfully; make their sacred vows, their all, and as their happiest grace on earth, to love Jesus Christ in His divine Sacrament, embrace His Cross, and unite heart and soul with His blessed Mother, as fervently as did their dear Mother Seton."

The death of her beloved Mother in Jesus Christ, was a heavy trial to Sister Elizabeth. But the instructive lessons of the good Father Moranvillé taught her to conform her will to the divine will: "Gather, then, my dear child," did he say, "and amass a treasure of merit by cheerfully adhering to whatever God will be pleased to ordain. If it be painful to nature, it will make us more worthy of the divine regard. The angels of the earth must not be less ready to obey the divine call, than those of Heaven. 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.' Are we not in reality, or rather, should we not be, "angels of the earth" by the privilege of our vocation?"

To her dying day the good Mother Elizabeth preserved the most lively remembrance of Mother Seton. A little casket she had, was filled with mementoes of her, and she has left it to the community in New York. It contains the manuscript journal of Mother Seton when in

Italy, a number of her letters, a prayer book whose margins are filled with sentences from the pen of the fervent mother, and one of her caps belts and shawls. These latter are subsisting memorials of her love for holy poverty. Mother Elizabeth also possessed her beautiful retreat journals, but these were lost on a journey, and though repeatedly advertised for, were never found.

The memory of the holy, zealous, gifted, enlightened Mother Seton, should be embalmed in the memory of every sister of charity, even as it was in that of the good Mother Elizabeth.

CHAPTER X.

Sister Elizabeth Arrives in Philadelphia—Her First Experience with the Orphans—Father Moranvillé Comforts her in her Trials—Death of her Brother, Edward.

SISTER ELIZABETH arrived in Philadelphia the very year that the Right Rev. Bishop Conwell took possession of his see, wherein he was to experience the bitterest trials and the most oppressive cares. At the very outset, he was obliged to excommunicate the pastor of St. Mary's Church, who, after having given a great deal of trouble to Bishop Conwell's predecessor, now openly contemned all episcopal authority. For some time after his excommunication, this unhappy man vacillated between right and wrong, being at times the active tool of some misguided laymen. After having given a vast amount of scandal, he plunged recklessly into the most open disorders. Sister Elizabeth, so sensible to all the evils of the time, felt her heart sorely torn by these sad occurrences. Her holy friend in Baltimore thus adverts to them: "You have experienced violent storms

in the place you are in. The enemy, always busy to sow discord and division in order to prevent the growth of piety, to detach from the tree the half-rotten branches, and to make them share in his frightful destiny, is carrying on his detestable work. Unhappy they who minister to his destructive views; and yet alas! he finds even within the sanctuary, from which he should be eternally banished, partners in his wicked designs. O, salt of the earth! how dost thou become a principle of corruption! O light of the world! how art thou changed into darkness, for many unwary, sensual men! O! He, Who knows how to draw good out of evil, will not suffer, for the comfort of the just, that these scandals should long prevail. Let us often call on Him, and entreat Him to visit His beloved vineyard, and not to abandon it to the rapacity of wild beasts, the emissaries of hell. The dear bishop, his place is truly desirable, for an apostolic man as he is. 'They have despised Me.' 'You shall suffer persecution on account of my Name.' 'The reward is not here.' Oh! may the divine spirit carry him undisturbed through all these storms, and make his patient resignation proof against all the malice of his enemies."

My dear child, since I received your last, it has been a very busy time with me. Hardly a moment to think on myself; yet no forgetfulness of you at the altar. The Spouse of virgins invoked, called upon for the protection of those that follow His blessed way, and for you in particular, you, my first-born. Sink not under the burden; our blessed Lord is willing to share it with you."

Sister Elizabeth, in entering on her duties at this asylum, began to exercise, for the first time, her maternal care for the orphan. She seemed to feel the holiness of her charge, and she showed, as far as she could, the same tenderness for those little ones, as Jesus Christ had evinced on earth. For she seemed to think His sacred eyes were bent upon her, while his adorable heart was ever pleading with her to exercise the utmost zeal for their good. Among the orphan boys in the asylum were two favored ones—Francis Gartland, afterwards the Right Rev. Bishop Gartland of Savannah, and another, who is now a bright ornament of the Society of Jesus. The confusion into which ecclesiastical matters spiritual and temporal were thrown in Philadelphia at that time, must have caused some discomfiture to the orphans, but the zeal and devotedness of the sisters prevented them

from suffering. Sister Elizabeth experienced many trials, and Father Moranvillé told her in a letter that he was pleased that she had them. "I rejoice at your little trials: God who sends them to you, will give you His grace to make them subservient to His gracious designs, and to your perfection. Dear Spouse of Jesus, watch in expectation of your heavenly bridegroom—have your lamp well trimmed, well prepared, that, upon His coming, you may be numbered among the wise, and receive the reward of your watchfulness. A new year has begun, more time has our merciful Lord given us to be employed in His service, and in securing to ourselves the bliss promised to our perseverance. This is His intention, this should be the continual object of our pious solicitude. Every moment of time well managed, will add a new gem to our crown.

Just now a Frenchman asked me if I had any commands for Philadelphia. "No other," did I say, "than to forward a letter to one of my dear children," and he promised to deliver the present, to you. Your respected bishop has met with some difficulties, but all this is in the order of Providence. The apostles, his predecessors, met with many more. 'Tis true, they were of a different kind. But these, also, are the work

of the enemy, who by scandals, strives to misrepresent our faithful and immaculate Church. The tares and cockle are permitted to grow up amongst the wheat. "*Blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me.*"

Be of good heart, my child, no rest is allowed us here below first or last; we have to contend with many difficulties. A good will, a generous heart, a great purity of intention, will help us to defeat the strategems of the enemy, and to advance. I confidently hope that He who has committed to your weak hands, this new trust, will carry you safely through it, and direct everything for your present and future comfort."

At the close of the year, Father Moranvillé thus spoke to her: "My long silence needs no apology. I have been much employed these days past. You were present to our mind; we presented the little we did, in union with your devotions to the lovely Infant, in thanksgiving for His wonderful love to us, so sweetly displayed in the mystery of His birth. How often have I seen you, prostrate at His feet, suckling Him with the tears of your compunction and love, warming Him by the fervor of your prayers, and earnestly wishing He would grow in you, by your progress in those amiable virtues of which He has set us so great an

example. You surely placed yourselves with Mary and Joseph near the crib; you joined your admiration with theirs, in order to make yours more agreeable in the sight of your dear Jesus. Nor did you lose sight of the angels and the Shepherds, who admired, praised, blessed, and loved the divine Infant laid on the straw for the love of us. His manger must be to us a sacred pulpit, from which He teaches us to deny ourselves, to cherish our blessed state of poverty and to mortify our senses on all occasions. Precious lessons, which we ought to lay up carefully in our hearts and set them before us as a mirror, in which we will see what to correct, what to avoid, what to pursue. May we ever profit by them, be ever renewed in spirit, and put on the new man, who is created in justice, and in holiness of truth.

Another year is past!—what a comfort it must be for us, if we have well improved all the blessings we have received. Of that last year, nothing now remains but the merit and demerit of our performances during the course of it. It is an image of our life, except that the last of our days will be the beginning of eternity. Were we certain, this year would be our last, what would we not do, what would we not all suffer, in order to secure to ourselves, immortal bliss? If

we but live as we shall wish to have lived at the hour of our death, we cannot miss the object of our desires. This is an effect of christian prudence, to consider every day as though it were the last, to perform every action as though we were to give an account of it as soon as done. This thought will be a powerful encouragement to us not to neglect anything, but to discharge all our obligations with great exactitude.

You are very busy now, your family is increasing every day. I have just seen with great satisfaction our Reverend and dear friend, Mr. Dubois. He goes now to see you,—what a delightful pleasure for the whole family! Three of my dear children started for Kentucky last Thursday, to enter the order of the Friends of Mary at the Foot of the Cross. I hope this is a good work for me and more so for them. Very little to be done in our part of the world, in the way of great virtues; we do not even as much as is essential. To be instrumental in separating a few from its wretched world is the best I can do. Oh! these dear children, with you, Sister Scholastica, two others at the Mountain, and two more at La Trappe, will interest themselves in my behalf and plead my cause before the Sovereign Judge, as the grateful people of Israel pleaded before King Saul for

the guilty Jonathan: 'Shall Jonathan then die, who has wrought this great salvation in Israel?' This must not be. Dear Sister and beloved child, this is the cry you should often send to Heaven from your compassionate heart, to draw upon me many graces, I am so unworthy to receive, yet so much need in my wretchedness. I often look towards the blessed asylum you inhabit for this assistance."

In 1822, the yellow fever made its third appearance in Baltimore. Father Moranvillé was most assiduous in his attendance on the sick and dying. In September of this year, he announced to Sister Elizabeth the death of her brother Edward. He did so, in a manner, that proved he believed her truly detached: "Poor Edward," he says, "received this morning the last blessing at my hands. The dear child sent for me the day before yesterday, as soon as he felt very sick. I went to sister's where he was, and finding him in good dispositions, prepared him for his long journey. I saw him again yesterday, and we spoke together. I was much pleased with the religious sentiment he manifested to me upon those occasions. I hope he now enjoys the fruits of his sincere return to God. This, my dear child, must be for you a source of great comfort: it is an alleviation to

the grief of your dear mother. He died this morning at half past eight, without a struggle and after a very short agony, and on the fifth day of his illness. Happy in having departed from this land of misery before the world had corrupted his heart! Yet, in case he had not a sufficient time fully to satisfy the divine Justice, we shall pray for him, and beg of the Almighty to shorten the time of his sufferings. Ever yours in the God of consolation." * Sister Elizabeth's solid

* The good Father during one of these visitations of the yellow fever wrote the following letter to Sister Elizabeth: "You have not been ignorant of the visitation we had last Summer. Two thirds of the people in Fell's Point left the spot; only the poor remained with me. You may be sure I had plenty to do. Left alone to attend the sick, to minister to them the consolations of our blessed religion, I had no time to think of anything else. The other ministers being absent, I had a fine chance to visit many, who, without this circumstance, had never thought of altering their minds. Some, more than forty, listened to me with satisfaction, and appeared thankful for the interest I manifested for them in their wretched condition. Grace moved their hearts, and they readily complied with everything that was demanded of them. Oh! the happy event which procured them so precious a call and so great a favor! I hope the generosity with which they embraced our blessed Faith, obtained in the sight of an all-merciful God, the forgiveness of their past errors and infidelities. I will only mention one, whose conversion was in some manner wonderful. Her name was Rebecca Birch. She was a young married person about twenty-three. On the third day of her sickness, she sent for me early in the morning. I ran immediately to the spot. But what was my surprise, when after having exchanged a few words with her, she told me she did not want my ministry as a priest, but as one who might relieve her in her distressed state. 'For this,' I replied, 'I will do what I can,—but the soul, your dear soul?' 'Be not uneasy about that,' said she, 'I have made

devotion to the suffering members of Jesus Christ, arose from her supernatural view of things. Taught by Father Moranvillé, she looked upon every poor person as a living tabernacle of Jesus Christ.

Since He, our meek Saviour, has declared that He accepts as done to Himself, all that is done for the needy, methinks, God was perfecting His work in her, as it were, by degrees, and preparing her for those onerous duties, He had decreed she should discharge. A letter from Father Moranvillé at this time began thus: "*Can you drink of the chalice of which I am*

---

this long while, my peace with my God; I have experienced so many consolations in the blessed meeting I cannot forsake all this or turn a stranger to the Methodist doctrine.' In vain, did I say to her all that charity could suggest to me, to make her sensible of her error and the danger she was in. 'One day more, my dear child, and you will find unhappily, to your everlasting despair that once you had it in your power to save your soul.' After having remained with her a whole hour, without obtaining anything favorable, and seeing she would no longer speak to me, I departed, recommending her earnestly to God's mercy. At night, I visited her again, but to no purpose. The same obstinacy, the same opposition to the grace offered. In the morning going to say Mass, I had her present to my mind. 'O! my God,' did I say, 'if she is not living, I do not pray for her: but if she is still in the way, have You not still a particular grace for her in the treasury of Your mercies? Look to Your dear Son, His merits are inexhaustible, glorify Him, or rather, glorify Yourself, '*for the dead shall not praise thee.*' After Mass and my thanksgiving, before I left the sacristy, I said the prayer of St. Francis Xavier for infidels and obstinate sinners: 'Great Saint, thou lover of souls, I am not worthy of the favor I solicit through thy mediation: present this thy

to drink?' '*The chalice*,' says the prophet, '*which inebriateth me, how good it is.*"' Then, he went on in his usual fervid strain: "Yes, my dear child, we do nothing, or very little indeed. And, although we did much, we are still with reason, unprofitable servants. The ability and the grace necessary to exert it never come from us. It is well if we do not contradict that grace, or make it void through the many distractions that carry away our thoughts. Let us try to co-operate with it, as faithfully as we can. The talent given, were it only one, must be

prayer, before the throne of the Almighty in behalf of Rebecca; and obtain for that unfortunate soul, what thou hast obtained for so many others, whose case was no less desperate.' This being done I went to my house, and lo! a woman was there waiting for me. 'Make haste,' she said, 'Rebecca Birch sends for you.' 'Rebecca,' said I, 'well St. Francis Xavier has done the whole business.'

Upon my entering into her room, Rebecca streched her hand to me with a joyful and open countenance and cried out before all who were present, bursting into tears: 'O Father come! and forgive me my stubbornness: I am your child: I am a member of the holy Catholic Church, do hear my Confession!' To be short, she prepared herself for death in a most edifying manner, repeating continually that God had bestowed on her a great favor, giving salutary admonitions to her husband, recommending him in my presence to frequent the Catholic Church and to apply to me for instruction. She lived to the next day when she breathed her last with a calm resignation, and with all the comforts of a true Christian. Oh! how merciful God is to those poor sinners who have not, as unfaithful Catholics abused His graces and Sacraments. May He soon admit to the place of [eternal] refreshment all those who have come to Him and His Church upon this occasion! Another in my place, would have, during that awful visitation, made a great harvest, but poor me! everything perishes in my hands for want of a greater union with Him Who gives the increase. Yet, with

improved. The severe judge will demand the interest of it, and even something more, for the interest must be equal to the principal. Two must give four, consequently, one, two. But let not this damp in any way our resolution; the Master is good, He looks chiefly to the intention. If this be pure: if it has nothing in view but His eternal glory, the intention will consecrate the deed, though it may meet with no success. '*Well done good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things*, etc. I always think of you all with great satisfaction. How could a father forget his best

---

so little co-operation on my part, God was so merciful as to lavish His comforts upon me. Never before, did I enjoy the consolations I then felt, the more I had to do, the more courage and resolution I found in myself. I was ready for every call; still, I might have done a great deal more, had I been bold enough to force my way into those wretched mansions where many died without the least thought of eternity. I waited to be called, and on many occasions, I was not. The fever has only ceased these some days past. I expected to have seen you before now; many unforeseen circumstances have prevented. Duty must go before personal satisfaction. '*Thy will be done!*' We are always present to each other in the sight of God: this comforts me and makes me overlook the rest. You say you would have many things to say to me, so should I to you, we shall communicate all this to Him, Who so wisely directs such as look up to Him alone. I have heard of all your solicitude for me during my illness, and I most feelingly thank you for all the good prayers, you and your dear sisters have offered for my recovery. Wretched and barren tree, often condemned to be cut off, I am still allowed sometime more, in hopes I may bear better fruit. 'Tis true, before and after my sickness, I was much employed, but have I derived from my labors the many blessings annexed to them?"

children? Are they not a source of alleviation to him in the midst of so many who are only such in name. O faith! how faint thy impression is on many! How happy we ought to esteem ourselves for not being entangled in worldly solicitudes, which, like thorns, are apt to choke the good seed and make us lose sight of the one thing necessary!"

Sister Rose was appointed to succeed Mother Seton as superioress of the community in 1821. Soon after her arrival at St. Joseph's she determined to send Sister Elizabeth to New York. The health of this good sister had been poorer than usual, but her multiplied duties found her ever forgetful of self, as Father Moranvillé, in a few lines he wrote her about this time, had surmised they would. "I hope," he says, "that your health is now pretty tolerable, though you have surely as little desire, as chance, to mind it. No doubt you wish to say with the prophet: '*Because of Thee, we mortify ourselves all the day long, and we rejoice on the days in which we have seen evils.*' A foreign land, a vale of tears, a place of banishment, does not offer to an immortal soul, great attractions. Hence, all those who have walked before us in the same way in which we do, often repeated after the model of true lovers: 'I

wish to be dissolved and to be with Christ.' Your sister, Mrs. M. is well, very busy as usual. One appearance only at the table of the strong since Easter. Worldly solicitudes cool devotion, and the yoke of matrimony divides the heart. '*Quo modo placeat viro?*' Wretched world! happy he, who can escape the torrent which hurries him along. I feel miserable to be still living in it. Who shall give me the wings of a dove, to fly and rest in a more secure place?"

CHAPTER XI.

Sister Elizabeth goes to New York—Her Solicitude for the Orphans—Very Rev. Dr. Power—Death of Father Moranvillé.

Sister Elizabeth arrived in New York to assume the duties of her new post, on Christmas eve, 1822, and from this date we shall be able to enter into fuller details concerning her. St. Patrick's Asylum was not then the fine building it now is; it was but a poor frame house in Mott Street. Part of the house, small as it was, was occupied by a dressmaker. The orphans numbered about thirty in all, including the boys and girls. Having no fixed resources, they were emphatically children of Providence. For their Christmas dinner that year, they had pork, cabbage, and potatoes, and in a letter to Mother Rose, Sister Elizabeth said: "It was very good." It was her delight to partake of the orphans' fare, and she always found pleasure in helping herself from their dishes. The first orphan she received into the house is now a man of respectable standing in New York. Until her death, he always looked upon her, as his own Mother. When he heard of her first severe attack, some four years before her death, he hastened to the asylum, and on seeing her in

her debilitated state wept like a child. "Her heart was full of solicitude for the motherless ones confided to her care;" says one of her orphan boys, "she not only watched over them while they were under her immediate charge, but after they were taken from the asylum by their friends or relations. She tried ever to keep a watchful eye over her boys, and if, as it sometimes happened, those who assumed the office of their guardians, treated them unkindly, her charitable heart felt such ill-treatment keenly." The ladies of New York, soon became acquainted with the good Sister Elizabeth, and formed an association to contribute to the relief of the orphans. Some Protestant ladies, also, subscribed to this laudable undertaking, being favorably disposed to the asylum by their respect for Sister Elizabeth, whose devotedness was well known to them. A lady tells me, she once gave some money to Sister for her orphans, and that she was thanked most gratefully three different times. However great their distress, Sister could not herself beg for the orphans, because she was so sensitive under refusals. Once, while the asylum was in some pressing necessity, she was called upon by a Catholic lady, who seemed to be living at her ease, and was forming at the moment many schemes for

her personal happiness. Sister Elizabeth ventured to ask a little assistance for her dear family. Immediately, the lady excused herself under various pretexts. From that time, the good sister relied entirely on Providence, which always favored her sooner or later. This sensitiveness need not surprise us, for she possessed all the tender, instinctive delicacy of a mother's heart for her dear ones in Jesus Christ. She ranked herself as poor with them, and hence was herself one of the bashful poor.

Very Reverend Dr. Power became administrator of the diocese of New York, in 1824, on the death of the good Bishop Connolly, who was justly called "a pious, worthy, and venerable Bishop."* We have already noticed that this holy bishop called the Sisters of Charity to New York in 1817, one year after he had taken possession of his See; that three sisters came "and commenced in an humble way an institution destined to become a most flourishing asylum." "What is more, he founded, by the introduction of their order, those many establishments of charity, mercy, and education which cover the State of New York, and in which alone, the rule and dress of Mother Seton are

---

* Catholic Church in the United States.

preserved unaltered."* But the Bishop had been too much embarrassed to advance the interests of the Asylum, in any other way than by his prayers and good wishes, for, "he had to discharge the duties of a parish priest, without revenue, relying entirely on the boards of trustees and their caprices, while his Cathedral was loaded with debt." After his demise Very Rev. Dr. Power continued to administer the diocese for two years. During all his life, Dr. Power was, emphatically the orphans' friend. "Even to-day," says Cardinal McCloskey, "is he not looked upon by the Catholics of New York, as the foster Father of their dearest and most cherished institution, the orphan asylum of Prince Street? Right well do we remember the fervid eloquence with which he pleaded the cause of the fatherless. And when age and infirmities prevented him from visiting his dear children, often did he stand on his tottering limbs, to present their claims to those on whom Providence had lavished abundance. Far and wide, is he venerated as the father of the orphan, and the most fragrant incense that ascends to heaven is the frequent and fervid prayer that issues for him from the parted lips

---

* Catholic Church in the United States.

of these little innocents. Even in his old age, did these young tendrils cluster round the aged oak that reared them in their infancy, and in return, they became the stay and comfort of him who had nourished them in his vigor." From the time of his appointment as administrator, we may date the beginning of easier times for the asylum.

In 1824, Sister Elizabeth heard of the death of her devoted Father in Christ, the venerable Abbé Moranvillé. This good Father seems in the latter years of his life to have endured a severe conflict within himself between a love for his congregation, and a desire to retire within the seclusion of a monastery. Again and again, had he manifested this desire in his letters to Sister Elizabeth. In one of these letters, he said: "Yes, I have thought of you in a particular manner during your retreat. I have united myself to your fervent prayers. I hope that blessed St. Vincent de Paul has heard his daughter, and obtained at the throne of divine mercy some peculiar graces for herself, and for poor me. How happy you are in being allowed so much time to take a general review of your interior, of your accounts with God. We, who are launched out into the world, have hardly a moment to think on ourselves. How many

miseries we bear of which we are not sensible, because, not sufficiently retired! Oh! it is in solitude God speaks to the heart! I envy you your situation. Keep your hands lifted up, lest we should fail in the conflict. This retreat, my dear child, is a new engagement for you to redouble your fervor. The more we receive, the greater must be our acknowledgment, and our application to sanctify every action, every affection, every thought of ours But this becomes easy to her who is continually united to the Beloved. Ah! when shall I myself live only for Him, Who has done so much for me, and Who renews every day the tokens of His unbounded mercy to me? The world is no proper place for us, or rather, it is the best place for such as never appear but to sanctify it. But I who am so wretched and miserable, I find in the world, a thousand objects that distract me, take me off from what I should ever have in my mind, and render my poor soul languid and tepid, when she should be all burning with flames. Forget not to beg for me that interior spirit which makes us familiar with heavenly things and inspires us with disgust for all that is fleeting and perishable. I long too much for a place of retirement." But in him, active zeal for religion so far predominated as to make him

ever one of the most devoted of pastors. In June, 1823, he wrote to Sister Elizabeth from the seminary in Baltimore, that having gone there a short time to recruit, he had been taken very sick. He said that it was expected he would spend the remainder of his days near Emmittsburg, in order to direct the sisterhood, and that everything was prepared for it, the archbishop having given his consent. "But alas!" said he, "how could I presume to direct such heavenly souls? I know all my poverty, and am so sensible of my inability, that I am sure there is nobody more unfit for such a task." He spoke also of taking a journey with his superior's permission to France. "Were I to go," he adds, "I expect to remain only a few months, not among my carnal relations but with my old friends of the seminary in Paris. What you have said to me of my dear child Agnes, of her zeal in teaching the children of distress, afforded me much satisfaction. How pleasing it must be for you all to be called to relieve all manner of wants. Fear no difficulty—a sweet confidence in the Almighty, Who has honored you with so noble a vocation, will draw upon you new favors from day to day, and make all obstacles disappear. See how He has conducted you so far."

The good Father spent a little time in New York before embarking for France, and he, no doubt, re animated the fervor of all his old children at Prince Street asylum, in honoring them with his presence. As he approached the term of his career, his heart seemed to glow with new ardors of divine love, and he had the holy art of communicating the same in some degree, to all whom he met on terms of holy friendship.

He voyaged to Europe in company with the Right Rev. Bishop Cheverus. This good Bishop knew of the Father's holy prodigality to the poor, and fearing as they were much delayed in their passage, that he would not have sufficient to defray his expenses, offered him some funds, which, however, were gratefully declined.

The good Father's exhausted nature gave way soon after his arrival in France, and he died on the 17th of May, 1824, in the odor of sanctity, and with so great a reputation, that his body was touched with beads, crucifixes, and medals, by the people who crowded around his remains.*

---

*Many vain efforts were made by the Trustees of St. Patrick's Church, Baltimore, to procure his remains, at least his heart, in order, as they said, that it might be "enshrined at the altar which his zeal had erected to the living God, and where he had so often offered the sacrifice of a burning heart."

CHAPTER XII.

Prince Street Asylum—Dr. Powers—His Conference to the Sisters—Bishop Dubois Counsels a new Mother-house in New York—Sister Elizabeth again Assistant Mother—She Returns to New York—Two Orphans Study in Rome for the Priesthood—Poverty of the Asylum—Death of young Perry—Sister Elizabeth Stricken with Typhus—Her Calmness in Time of Fire—Letter of Bishop Bruté—Bishop Hughes.

In 1825, the number of orphans had become so great, that a larger building seemed absolutely necessary. Dr. Power laid the corner-stone of the present fine structure in Prince Sreet, in the presence of the mayor, aldermen, and principal citizens. On a certain day, after the walls had risen a few feet, the workmen, finding that there were no more funds in hand, threw up the job. A little after, Dr. Power came over to see how things were progressing, and was very much surprised to find the work abandoned. On learning the cause from Sister Elizabeth, he set out on a begging tour, and returned soon after with his feet all way-worn, it is true, but with several thousand dollars collected, for the prosecution of this work so dear to him. The same honorable gentlemen, who had assisted at the laying of the corner-stone, joined in the procession, by which

the orphans were conducted with much ceremony, to their new home on the completion of the asylum. A good dinner had been prepared for his increasing family by the happy Dr. Power, and everything during the day passed off in a manner highly creditable to religion.

Not only was Dr. Power the orphans' friend, he was, also, pre-eminently, the sisters' friend.

The following beautiful Conference was given by him to the sisters on the occasion of the renovation of vows.

Ps. 43, Verse 22. "*Because for Thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.*"

Ponder well, beloved, these words, which were spoken for your instruction by the holy prophet long before you were born. Blessed be God, who has called you from this wicked world, in which many are in danger of being lost, by following its fleeting pleasures, and their own evil desires. Consider then, and reflect seriously, on your vocation to the society to which you belong, and in which, in a little time and with a little labor, you can secure eternal happiness. You have entered on the religious state—you have willingly renounced every thing—you are in some

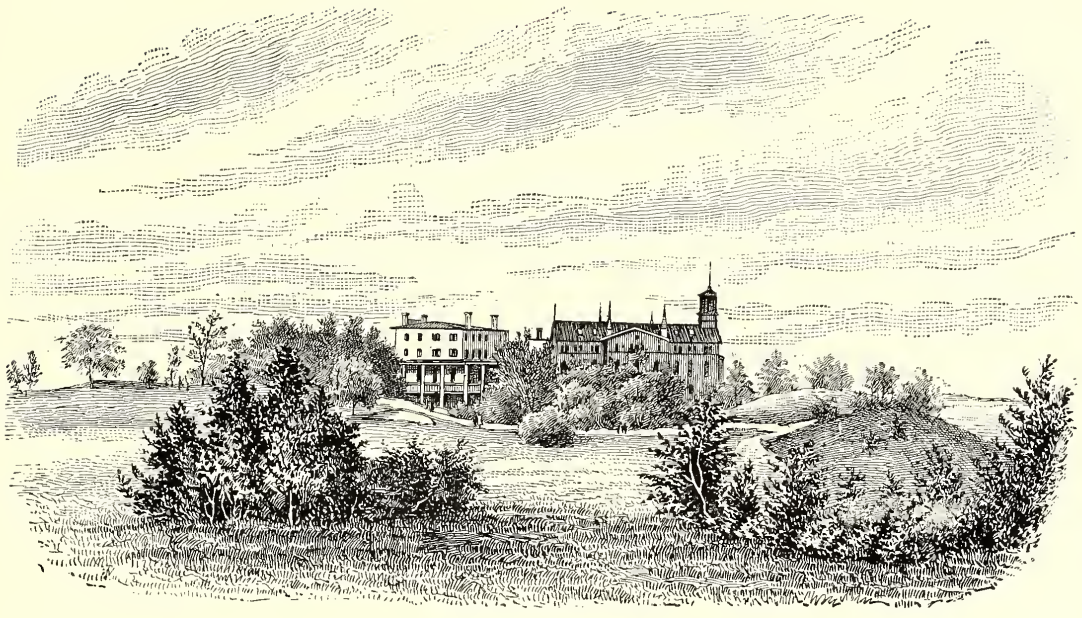
measure dead to the world—you are, as it were in your graves,—this is indicated by the habit in which you are shrouded,—this is indicated by public opinion, which says you are not of the world, but that you are children of the Most High. Let your affections, then, rest on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, 'for ye are dead,' says the Apostle, 'and your life is hid with Christ in God.' When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. Mortify, therefore, your members, whilst you are upon the earth, and take heed, that unnecessary indulgence and self-love, do not lead you to eternal torments. To fight daily against our evil desires and passions is a serious warfare, but it ceases to be disagreeable when we reflect on the great fruits of our victory. In order to support this arduous contest, never forget the words of the Spouse of Jesus Christ, when she sings the triumphs of His martyrs. Their eulogy is: 'The saints of God fought a great fight.—They passed through fire and water, and are now saved.'

Oh! dearly beloved, who stand here in obedience, if you are faithful to your vows and promises, you are martyrs, martyrs by your fidelity. You will receive crowns and precious stones, as often as by your occupations you

expose yourselves for Christ. And if you renounce your own will, and resist all sensual desires, your inward consolation will be great. Every religious person under obedience, who renounces his own will in all things, is in the truest sense a martyr, even without shedding a drop of blood under the knife of the executioner. We know that the holy martyrs passed through various tortures to the kingdom of Heaven,—that they were entirely resigned to the will of God, and determined to endure everything for His sake. They are your models, my dear sisters. When, then, a Sister of Charity, receives from her superior any command repugnant to the feelings,—when she checks and even stifles the nascent murmurings of weak nature, she offers to God a most acceptable sacrifice on the altar of her heart, and shares in the triumphs of the martyrs by this victory, which she gains over herself. You have often read how the martyrs were dragged to prison, and loaded with heavy chains,—how they were cast into dungeons, where they had to endure hunger and all manner of privation, and that, nevertheless, they remained unshaken, and returned thanks to God for having been found worthy to suffer for his sake. Do you, my dearly beloved, look on their example; do not sink under your

crosses and trials. Do not shrink from the contest, before the hour of victory arrives. They alone will be crowned, who persevere to the end, and recollect, that the labor of your penance is light, when compared with their labors, and when contrasted with the pains of hell.

There are many ways, by which you may prove your fortitude in the cause of Christ, without the effusion of your blood, or the loss of your bodily members. The holy martyrs endured the most cruel tortures, and you ought to chastise your bodies, and bring them under subjection, by fasting, by watching, by silence, by performing the other painful or humiliating duties, prescribed by your Rule. Thus, and only thus, will you drink of the bitter chalice of the Lord, with the martyrs, and become partakers of their glory. Your voluntary poverty is also a species of martyrdom, and to this, as well as to the other, has the kingdom of heaven been promised by our Blessed Lord. Your silence, when observed in the spirit of your Rule, is a martyrdom, which will also be crowned with that of those, who have been deprived of the organ of speech for Christ's sake. When you turn away your eyes from the vanities of this world, this self-denial will make you share in the rewards of those, who were deprived of sight by



THE FIRST MOUNT ST. VINCENT,
Central Park, New York City.

The Catholic
Theological Union
LIBRARY
Chicago, Ill.

tyrants. When through obedience, you do that which is disgusting to flesh and blood, then are you dragged, bound hand and foot, to the place of execution, and with the martyrs will be your reward.

A good Sister of Charity must never forget, that she has no dominion over her person—that she is in the hands of superiors, and that obedience alone, will secure to her, after the termination of her mortal life, those joys, which, neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive."

This has been copied from the original manuscript in the Doctor's own handwriting.

It must have been a source of spiritual consolation to Sister Elizabeth, when she learned that the Rev. Mr. Dubois, who had been Superior-General of the Sisters of Charity since 1811, had been appointed to fill the vacant See of New York. His appointment and consecration took place in 1826.* On resigning his office at St. Joseph's, the holy man formed the project of founding a new Mother-house in New York, and had spoken on the subject to some of the sisters at St. Joseph's, who would have accompanied him, had the Archbishop of Bal-

* October 29, 1826.

timore acceded to the arrangement. As soon as the new bishop arrived in New York, he hastened to see the charge so dear to him at Prince Street asylum. He chose the altar of the asylum to offer up the holy sacrifice on week days. He often desired Mother Elizabeth to co-operate with him, in founding a Mother-house in New York, as the Right Rev. Bishop David, his predecessor as ecclesiastical superior of the Sisters of Charity at St. Joseph's, had already done at Nazareth, Kentucky. Sister Elizabeth, not seeing any necessity for such an arrangement, always declined having anything to do in the matter.

In the year 1828, Sister Elizabeth was called home to St. Joseph's to discharge once more the duties of assistant mother to Mother Augustine Le Count. Her removal from the field of her successful labors for the orphans gave great pain to the managers of the asylum, who wrote repeatedly for her return. Sister Elizabeth's heart, too, was secretly longing to be back with her orphan charge. God willed it so, it seems, for after she had been a year in Emmittsburg, it was thought best to yield to the reiterated requests of the managers. But her projected departure from Emmittsburg was kept a strict secret from the community, for it was well known that

her loss would be deeply felt. She arose at a very early hour to make her meditation, and while the community were performing the morning exercises in the chapel, the stage coach drove up to the door, and Sister Elizabeth stepping into it, bade farewell to St. Joseph's, as it proved, forever. After breakfast many were in quest of Sister Elizabeth. Sister Domitilla, then but a novice, was the first of the private sisters in the chapel that morning, and had met Sister Elizabeth as she rose from her meditation. Having heard shortly after, the stageman's horn, she quickly imparted her suspicions to her sisters that Sister Elizabeth had been sent on a mission.

On her arrival in New York, Sister Elizabeth was welcomed most cordially by all. The Rev. Mr. Walsh, whose good offices to the Community we shall have occasion to mention later, seemed overjoyed to think that the orphans had Sister Elizabeth again to watch over them. The children themselves were wild with delight.

Dr. Power was still the orphans' friend. He provided several with the means of prosecuting their studies for the priesthood, and sent some to Rome. Among these latter, was Daniel Ferry who had been in the asylum from his tenderest

years, and whose talents were well known to the good Father. In a joint letter to these dear orphan boys, at the Propaganda, he says :*

"My beloved children, the very pleasing accounts I have received of your conduct and of your progress in piety, have filled my heart with delight. Indeed, I could expect nothing else, when I think on the strict and attentive manner in which you have been brought up. You cannot conceive the joy of your dear mothers in Christ [the sisters at the asylum], when they hear priests and bishops bearing honorable testimony to your good conduct. Remember, my dearly beloved, the pains and cares I have had with you; remember the high destinies to which I trust the Almighty, in His mercy, has called you, and use all your endeavors to fit yourselves for them. You know the great field that remains for you to cultivate; divine Providence has placed you where you can make abundant preparation, and my ardent prayer is, that you may profit by all the opportunities, that are afforded you. I need not inform you that my greatest comfort is to think, that when summoned before my Master, I have planted with my own hand

* November 16, 1833.

in a luxuriant soil three little slips, which are now growing up in all the luxuriency of vegetation, and which will yield abundant fruit in due season.

Receive my blessing, dearly beloved, and pray for your affectionate Father in Christ,

JOHN POWER, V. G.

It is easy to discern with what affectionate interest, he regarded these dear children in Christ. These young men were, however, destined as we shall see, to bloom in the Church triumphant, after having sent forth the buds of every virtue during their short career on earth. It is supposed their assiduity at study, and the cold marble floors, to which they were so perfectly unused, superinduced lung disease, which, eventually led them to the grave. Young Ferry had early distinguished himself at the Roman College, and Gregory XVI., of holy memory, bestowed several marks of favor on him. Daniel had the honor of delivering one of his poems at the exhibition of languages in the college of the Propaganda Fide.*

In 1833, the west wing was added to the asylum in Prince Street, and the east wing in 1834. The house was very poor, and the

---

* January 9, 1837.

children were badly clothed, having scarcely enough to protect them from the cold. Sister Philipine, who is still living, and was there on a mission at the asylum as late as 1834, tells me that at that time the children were without stockings, while their shoes were made out of cowhide of the roughest kind; there was no binding on the shoes, but, still, they had one recommendation, they wore like steel.

A lady sent a large package of the ends of pieces of broadcloth, which are generally of variegated colors, and the Sisters by dint of piecing manufactured shawls out of them. An Irish gentleman about this time presented the orphans with a large number of the coarsest linen threaded stockings, which seemed to defy all attempts to wear them out. It is said that some of the same parcel of stockings were in wear in 1857. A singular incident at this time, 1836, displayed Sister Elizabeth's confidence in God. One morning Sister Susan Knott came with tears in her eyes, to tell Sister Elizabeth that there was nothing, absolutely nothing for the dinner. "Are there no *potatoes*, dear sister?" asked Sister Elizabeth. "No," said the almost disheartened sister housekeeper, "I gave the children and sisters all I had this morning. Indeed, I see no other way," she continued, "but that this asylum

should go down, since the people will not support it." "My dear sister," said Sister Elizabeth, in her usual placid manner, "God will provide for His own, do not fear. If He wills us to be here, He will give us the means to do the good I believe we wish to do. If He does not will it, the sooner the work goes down the better. Let us rely on his Providence alone." The sister, who felt at least somewhat consoled, withdrew, and, scarcely had she done so, when the door bell rang, and a worthy gardener was ushered into the room where Sister Elizabeth was sitting. "Sister Elizabeth, I wish you good morning," said he, "and I have come to tell you that I brought a wagon load of vegetables of several kinds to market this morning, but I found I could not sell them to suit me, so I said to myself, I will give them to the orphans, and I have brought them all over to you." Warm thanks were rendered to the honest countryman, who had thus come to their relief in their dire necessity, and Sister Susan, once more in good spirits, thought at least she would have a good vegetable dinner for the dear children and sisters. "He who trusteth in the Lord, shall not be confounded." Before long the door bell rang again, and an unknown benefactor gave Sister Elizabeth fifty dollars.

Immediately meat was procured, and from that day the orphans always had enough, at least, of plain food. Ah! who can read this, without believing that the filial confidence of Sister Elizabeth was tried, only to be rewarded. She had no reason to fear, for the words of her holy founder, uttered under inspiration, it would almost seem, from their emphatic and absolute character, were no doubt impressed on her mind. He commands the Sisters of Charity to abandon themselves to divine Providence, as an infant to its nurse, fully persuaded, that while they are faithful to their holy rules and vows, God will protect them, even when they seem deprived of every resource.

From time to time, the good sister was encouraged by the cheering accounts, she received of her orphans who had left her to push their way through the world. Some of the boys entered on an ecclesiastical course of studies in different colleges. It has been said, that no boys in the colleges were so neatly and tastefully clothed as Sister Elizabeth's orphans. The feelings of those boys were sacred to her, and she never tired managing to provide their wardrobes. Large boxes of clothing were regularly expressed to them by this, their devoted mother.

In 1838, the health of young Ferry, who was still pursuing his studies in Rome, became so much impaired that the physicians declared that the only chance for his recovery, was in a speedy return to his native land. On the eve of his leaving the Eternal City, he went to receive the blessing of the Holy Father. It was given him, in the most affectionate, earnest manner, and the Holy Father reminding him that not being a priest as yet, he had not the power of indulgencing sacred things, said "I will give it to you under the trying circumstances, in advance of your receiving Holy Orders."

The poor student, sick and wayworn, hastened on his landing in New York, to that sacred home of his youth, which, in his tender childhood, he had thus apostrophized:

"O! blest asylum, happy home!
Our dear beloved lot!
We know no hazard whilst we live
Where sorrow is forgot!" *

He reached the asylum, September 21, and, just in time, as we may add, to die among those dear and devoted friends, who had raised him from helpless infancy, and, who like heavenly guardians, watching over his tender years, had

---

* See Children's Catholic Magazine, 1842.

carefully tutored him in the ways of piety and virtue, and who were looking forward with holy impatience to the time when he would return "rich in classic lore," a priest of the living God. Sister Elizabeth, who regarded him as her child, saw only the wreck of the noble youth she had trained. Every care was lavished on the sick student, but he lingered only a week. Just as he was departing he desired all the sisters to say the Rosary with him. After this exertion, exhausted nature sank completely. Sister Elizabeth remarking that his dying eyes seemed searching for something brought him a picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary. With a grateful smile, he fixed his eyes upon it and soon after expired. Dr. Power preached at the High Mass of Requiem, and after it the sisters and orphans received holy Communion. "Little did I think," remarked Dr. Power, "when I sent my bird to bask in the rays of an Italian sun, that, when returning, it would be in the storm, and with the arrow of death sunk deep in his bosom." It was well known that Sister Elizabeth had hoped ardently that he would be a bright ornament in the Church, and it was sweet to see how delicately her orphans exerted themselves to divert her from her loss, by getting up little plays in

which they acted their parts with unwonted spirit.

A little girl was brought to the asylum quite sick, but the sisters were not aware of the nature of her disease which proved to be typhus fever. Sister Elizabeth and Sister Ellen Timon, who was the infirmarian at that time, and for many years after, were both stricken by the disease in its most malignant form. For three days, Sister Elizabeth seemed as if in a trance, but the prayers of her sisters, together with those of the poor and the orphans, prevailed, and she was restored. Her case was probably worse than it would have been had she relinquished her duties earlier, before the disease had become so deep seated. The good Bishop Dubois was unremitting in his pastoral solicitude for her, and left no means untried to restore " Sister Betsey," as he used to call her, to health and usefulness. He was often heard to declare that he did not think she had ever lost her baptismal innocence. While her state was critical, poor persons were constantly calling to see how she was; their flowing tears betrayed their concern when the news was unfavorable, while their upturned look of gratitude to Heaven when it was favorable, evinced their thankfulness. Many were heard to declare: " Oh! if our Lord

would grant her to us, if it were only to speak a word of encouragement to us in our troubles!"

In 1838, the asylum was in the most imminent danger from its close proximity to a burning house. For hours, the destroying element threatened the home of the orphans, and without almost superhuman efforts it would have been consumed. Marks of the fire are still discernible on the railing of the back porch. Again and again, the wood work kindled, but wet carpets and the constant pouring of water, and, above all else, the favor of Heaven saved it. The sisters were peremptorily ordered to throw out the bedding, etc., but Sister Elizabeth was too self-possessed to permit it to be done. She passed through the house again and again, to see that the children were prepared to go out at a moment's warning. Every child had its little parcel ready to take with it. To Sister Elizabeth's calmness, must we attribute the perfect order that reigned in the asylum, even though the walls of the building were heated through and through.

In this same year, Sister Elizabeth prepared a large number of the orphans for Holy Communion. One of the band tells me, that it was usual for the girls to go up first to the railing, the sisters then filled the front, and the boys the

other side. The Right Rev. Mr. Dubois sang the High Mass on the occasion, and as the children approached the rails in the Cathedral, the sisters, unnoticed by Sister Elizabeth, remained back, seeing there were so many first communicants. Sister Elizabeth, going forward, knelt alone with her dear orphans. The entire railing was filled by the mother and her children. After Mass, the children retired to the asylum chapel, where Sister Elizabeth read the prayers of thanksgiving aloud with that tender devotion, with which she was wont always to say prayers. The orphan child who was telling me of this occasion declares that it seemed to them all on that morning that she had the voice of an angel.

We find from Bishop Bruté's letters to Sister Elizabeth,* that he was sometimes the guest of his old friend, Bishop Dubois, and that he delighted much in visiting the asylum, and in marking the improvements which year after year brought forth. In a letter he had written to her in 1837, he remarked, speaking of the onerous duties of Bishop Dubois, "that what she had said of help to our dear brother, he had thought of in Rome, and that surely at the next council it would be matter for her prayers, and that the Bishop

---

* He corresponded with her until his death, which took place in 1839.

himself could not but desire it." This letter was commenced in a characteristic manner: "A few lines!" "Oh! how can I refuse them to Sister Betsey, the friend of Mother Seton, and of Mr. Moranvillé!" After some remarks about church affairs in New York, he begs her "to read the letter to his venerable brother [Bishop Dubois], her true father, and the father of so many children at St. Patrick's, who would see in these lines, only the faithful, loving and respectful heart of his old friend, ever the same, busy with everything from pole to pole, from east to west." He expresses a hope that the Bishop "never failed to offer a memento for his brother of the Mount,* now of such a like responsibility, though Vincennes in the wilds of the far West, bears no comparison," he says, "to a New York, and a New York *as now*," for, it was at this time that the trustee system was giving the good Bishop of New York so much trouble. "But" he continued addressing Sister Elizabeth and her sisters; "you are his good angels of peace, models of patience to all, of simple trust in Providence, attentive only to your daily duty which will carry

---

* Right Rev. Bishop Bruté was the first bishop of Vincennes. Both of these holy men had spent many years at Mount St. Mary's.

you safe through any times, endear you to all, despite the malevolence of evil dreamers and workers. Oh! yes, sisters, my eyes fill with tears of consolation when I think what your prayer of love and humble, silent example may still effect. Lean to that side entirely, dear sister, as you would have seen dear Mother Seton do, —silent work, prayer, patience, good will to all, blessings for all, yes, for so expressly does our Lord command, and He gave the all-melting example. I need not repeat how delighted I was with the orphans; you *saw* it, but my feeble expression is nothing." In the sequel of this letter the Bishop reverts to a retreat he had given to the sisters in New York, in the year 1824, and wishes he might be permitted to give them another.

In 1838, the Rev. John Hughes of St. John's Church, Philadelphia, was consecrated coadjutor to the venerable Bishop Dubois, and a more happy choice could not have been made. While Sister Elizabeth was at St. Joseph's, in Mother Seton's time, in the year 1817, or 1818, a young man came one day to the house. Sister Elizabeth chanced to open the door for him. Mother Seton, recognizing something more than ordinary in his refined and intelligent appearance, on hearing his desire of employment, gave him a note to Father

Dubois, then President of Mount St. Mary's College.*

Father Dubois received the young man, but for some time, was ignorant of his merit. On a certain occasion, he chanced to fall into conversation with him. Astonished at his maturity of judgment and cultivation of mind, he was heard to declare, that he had found "a treasure! a gem!" He was almost beside himself with admiration. The young man at once entered the classes, finished a brilliant course of studies, was ordained priest, and became the glory of Mount St. Mary's College, and the most illustrious prelate of the United States. After his arrival in New York,† Bishop Dubois was attacked by paralysis and never recovered so far as to resume the duties of his office, though he lingered a few years.

---

* Mother Seton judged him to be too slight for severe labor, therefore she directed him to the college, hoping Father Dubois might give him some light duty; little thinking that this young man was destined to be the main instrument in the hands of Providence for perpetuating her holy Institute.

† I have been told that the father of Bishop Hughes had designed him for the priesthood in Ireland. He was pursuing his Latin studies during all his leisure moments before he entered college.

CHAPTER XIII.

Another Death at Propaganda—Kindness of Sister Elizabeth to Orphans—Her Confidence in their Prayers—Death of Bishop Dubois.

In 1839, William Keegan, another of Sister Elizabeth's orphan boys died at the Propaganda in Rome. He had been pursuing his studies there, through the influence and interest of Dr. Power, from 1833, or therebouts. Rev Dr. Ambrose Manahan was at that time making his course in the College. I have now before me a letter, which he wrote to Rev. Dr. Quarters of New York, announcing the death of his fellow student, and begging him to convey the sorrowful tidings to the kind ladies of the asylum, who had been as so many mothers and sisters to the deceased. Young Manahan remarks in his letter, that in his visits to the dying youth, he had suggested to him the great favor God had done him in having rescued him from a wicked world, and in having had him educated in innocence and preserved in so holy a way. "This," says the writer, "was a fond sentiment of his own, through all his sickness and pain, and oh! with what an expression of gratitude he then dwelt on it and smiled, calmly smiled, in the very face of

death." To her dying day, Mother Elizabeth remembered these young students, stricken down in the prime of life--nightly did she kneel before a picture hanging in the parlor at the asylum, and say a prayer for one of these boys whom she had promi ed to thus remember. In her choice of the time to do this, she showed how exact she was. Every evening at seven o'clock, she was wont to stand on the back porch to see the children pass up to the dormitories, then she would take advantage of the few moments intervening before the gas would be lit to say a little prayer for the departed.

Those among her orphans who were raised to the priesthood, used to say Mass from time to time, at the asylum. Oh! what bliss it was to her, to assist at the Holy Sacrifice offered by one of her dear orphans! Whenever they visited her, she would kneel down most humbly to receive their highly valued blessing. Words cannot express her respect, her reverential manner, towards priests. She could never endure any criticising of sermons, or of clergymen. Once, when a young sister had made an innocent, but thoughtless remark on the manner in which a priest had performed some function of his ministry, Mother gently reproved her saying that; "the impressive manner in which

Mother Seton had spoken on the respect and awe with which every one should be animated towards such as are called to a ministry higher than that of angels, had never departed from her mind." Not the slightest criticism or ridicule was ever indulged in by her.

Her feelings for the orphans were certainly maternal. In sickness, she was indefatigable in her care of them. A cloak of heavy material had been given her by a Catholic lady soon after her arrival in New York. The piety of the lady donor, a convert through the instrumentality of Mother Seton, or some other association unknown to the sisters, rendered this cloak attractive in the eyes of Sister Elizabeth. When she was sick herself, she had this old cloak (I believe it was old when it was presented to her), spread over her bed, or laid at its foot. It almost seemed, as if she had made a covenant with herself never to let it go out of her sight. As it had a bright red lining, her clinging to it, was the more remarkable. With this cloak thrown over her habit, she used to visit her dear sick children, again and again, in the night, and, even if none were sick, she would pass through the dormitories to see that all there were comfortable and peaceful. Three times a day, as regularly as she took her

meals, she visited the infirmary, if there were any suffering patients there, and sometimes she did so much more frequently. The children always manifested the greatest delight on seeing her; their little outstretched hands welcomed her. Up to a very short time previous to her death, she never failed to take her turn in watching by the sick children. Sister Domitilla told me a trait about this, her night watching, illustrative of both of their characters. Several children had been very sick for some time. It happened that the very night after Sister Elizabeth had watched, the sister next in turn, either through forgetfulness or overpowering fatigue, failed to repair to the infirmary after night prayers. Sister Domitilla remarked this, and knowing that Sister Elizabeth would fill her place, hastened to the infirmary in order to be in the sick room before her; but she found that Sister Elizabeth had anticipated her. She was so distressed, that she could not keep from remonstrating. "Sister Elizabeth," said she, "what are you going to do? It is not your turn again to sit up to-night!" "No matter, dear," said Sister Elizabeth, "I am going to sit up to-night." Sister Domitilla begged to be allowed to do so, and finally, Sister Elizabeth said she might, on condition she would call her at twelve;

"for," said she, "you are tired after cleaning and baking all day, and it is my place to fill all vacancies." At twelve, Sister went to her room, and called her several times, but her exhausted nature had sunk into so profound a slumber that she did not awake. Well satisfied, Sister returned to her post. The next morning, Sister Elizabeth reproved her for not having called her, and asked her as sternly as she could. "Why did you not call me?" "I did call you, Sister, three times, and even out loud, but you seemed not to hear me." "Nor did I," said the astonished Sister.

When death, stern, relentless death, unmindful of her aching heart, snatched any of the orphans from her, she evinced a mother's delicate acuteness of feeling towards their precious remains. We may express this better, perhaps, by using the saying of the sisters: "While any of them lay in death's cold embrace, she could not have shown greater respect if it had been a Bishop." Her own station was always at the side of the dead, and she would never allow a loud word to be spoken in or near the apartment. It was evident, she looked upon them with the eye of an enlightened faith, regarding their bodies as glorified temples of the living God. Her confidence in their intercession before the throne

of God, was great. Not many years since, the small-pox committed great ravages in her family of orphans. Dismayed, she turned her hopeful eyes towards a little boy, who had been for years a cripple, and who was then, almost in the agonies of death. He had shown great piety during years of suffering, and was now about to depart in peace. One of the sisters bore him in her arms to the foot of the altar, where he received the Holy Viaticum, in sentiments of singular piety. Sister Elizabeth, after a little time, approached the dying boy, and after having recounted the horrors of the disease raging among his brothers, begged him, when he went to Heaven, to ask our Lord to withdraw the scourge from his asylum home. The little child promised he would do so, with unhesitating confidence, and after his death, which occurred in a few hours, the small-pox ceased. This was the more extraordinary, as the attending physician had declared that the infection was, at that time, in the very cracks of the floor. She often sent petitions to heaven by the dying innocents.

It was remarked by all the sisters, that she always inclined her head, when she met an orphan, or a poor person, revering in all, her Lord and Savour Jesus Christ, Who takes as done to Him-

self what is done for His suffering members, the poor.

The holy and venerable Right Rev. Bishop Dubois* continued to say Mass at the asylum until a few days previous to his death, even though so disabled and infirm as to require support in walking. So great was his interest in the sisters, that he invariably remarked the absence of any one of them from the Communion rail. He would send for the absentee after his breakfast, to know whether duty, illness, or scrupulosity, had prevented her from approaching. When but a mere child, I remember that Bishop Dubois remarked to my mother, that one of the sisters had come to him to ask permission to arrange the sacred vessels on the altar. "And I told her," said he, "that I wished they were never touched but by hands as angelic as those of the sisters." His last effort before his death was to go over to the asylum to say Mass. When he was dying, he desired to be carried to the window to look out upon the asylum.

In accordance with his own wish and the sisters'

---

* Father White remarks, that "amidst the labors of his declining years, it was the source of the greatest consolation to him to have the coöperation of clergymen whom he had educated himself, and to behold around him Sisters of Charity, whom he had trained in the spirit of their exalted vocation, instructing the poor and tending the helpless orphans."

desires, a number of the sisters, with Sister Elizabeth, were present when he received the last sacraments. They were also present at his edifying death, which took place December 20, 1842, without a struggle and without a sigh, with a prayer on his lips and a sweet hope of heavenly rest in his heart. The following inscription was placed on the monument which was immediately reared to his memory at Mount St. Mary's: "The founder of Mount St. Mary's College and Seminary, and the Father of the Institution of the Sisters of Charity in this country."*

---

* The following is taken from a French journal of December, 1842. Bishop Dubois was born in Paris on the 24th of August, 1764. In September, 1787, he was ordained priest. The French Revolution breaking out soon after, he emigrated to the United States in 1791. He arrived in Richmond, Virginia, in the month of July of that year, and was most kindly received by the illustrious patriots of that period, Washington, Henry, Randolph, and Marshall, to whom he came recommended by letters from General Lafayette. During two years, he continued among them, improving himself in English and at the same time giving lessons in French in some of those distinguished families, whilst he administered the consolations of religion to the Catholics of that vicinity. In 1794, the Venerable Archbishop Carroll appointed him Pastor of a congregation in Frederick, Maryland. In 1808, he founded Mount St. Mary's College, now one of the most popular and prosperous literary institutions in the country. In [1811] he was charged with the superintendence of religious ladies at St. Joseph's, who had taken the resolution to consecrate themselves to the service of God. . . having the late amiable and saintly Mrs. Seton [formerly] of this city, for their Mother Superior." This mustard seed, Bishop Dubois planted in a manner and protected, and like his college, he lived to see it become a tree extending its branches to every part of the country.

CHAPTER XIV.

Spread of Schools and Asylums—Sister Elizabeth goes to Rochester—The Superior-General assents to the Organization of a New Mother-house in New York, and sends the Sisters his Blessing—Letter of Bishop Hughes—Action of Father Deluol and Bishop Hughes in the Formation of the New Community—Bishop Hughes and St. Vincent de Paul—Names of the Sisters who Formed the New Community—Father McElroy's Opinion.

FROM year to year the establishments of the Sisters of Charity in New York and its vicinity had been increasing in number. An orphan asylum had been opened in Brooklyn in 1830. Free schools had been established for the children in St. Patrick's and St. Peter's parishes about the same date. In 1832, a half-orphan asylum, and the free schools for the poor children of St. Mary's and St. Joseph's congregations were opened, all of which were placed under the care of the Sisters of Charity.

The number of orphans in the Prince Street asylum was so great that it seemed absolutely necessary to extend the establishment. Sister Elizabeth was still presiding over it, and we come now to the most interesting period of her life. Her orphans seemed a part of her being, so strong a hold did they possess on her

affections. She had a special attraction for training little boys. A lady tells me, she used to call quite frequently at the asylum, and was generally entertained with some little performances by some of the orphan girls or boys. She used, from time to time, to ask Sister Elizabeth which she liked better the little boys or the little girls, just to hear her answer, for, she says, she knew very well who were her favorites. Her answer was always the same: "I like the boys better!" Father Madden says: "Her ambition was to see her boys become useful members of society, and she did all she could, that their early training should tend in that direction. To her efforts, many are indebted for the positions which they now fill." To use the words of a well known gentleman (Sheriff Kelly): "I have met her boys," said he, "at the bar, in the halls of legislature, in the sanctuary, and in the cloister." He might have added, that wherever they are found, their hearts are full of gratitude to the Mother who watched with so much solicitude over their tender years, and that they will never forget to offer up to the living God, grateful prayers for her soul, and to beseech Him that His promise may be made good to her: "Whosoever shall give to these little ones

even a cup of cold water in My Name, shall not go without a reward."

We have seen how much the asylum in Prince Street had been extended since 1825. It grew, till it became what it now is, a monument to the charity and zeal of the noble and generous Catholics of New York.

As the Catholic population increased, other charitable institutions were committed to the care of the Sisters. Academies for the education of young ladies were opened by them, the first having been started in 1830, during the absence of Bishop Dubois, who was on a tour to Europe. Another very flourishing one was established in the Seventh Ward, and was known as St. Joseph's School. Under the able direction of Sister William-anna, it trained many Catholic young ladies in useful learning, and in different accomplishments. At the same time, religious instruction was entwined with the culture, and enhanced the value of the education thus given, as golden threads enhance the value of the web into which they are woven. This school, at a later date, gave rise to the Academy of Mount St. Vincent, near Harlem.*

---

* See Catholic Church in the United States, p. 407.

In 1845, Sister Mary Etienne Hall was chosen Mother Superior of the Sisters of Charity. In June of the following year, she wrote to Sister Elizabeth, desiring her to set out, at her earliest possible convenience, to assume charge of the orphan asylum in Rochester. The letter reached New York Saturday evening, too late indeed for sister to set out, but not too late for her to manifest her spirit of prompt obedience, for she immediately commenced making the necessary preparations. Her sisters tried to persuade her that the superiors did not mean she should depart so quickly; she merely repeated the words of the letter. The poor orphans felt her loss even more than the sisters. Monday morning saw her on her way to her new home. Sister Aloysia Lilly succeeded her at the Prince Street asylum. Though separated from the New York establishment, she still took a lively interest in it, and in her correspondence with Sister Aloysia, she made use of the following very strong expression in favor of the sisters she had known for so many years: "I would die for the sisters in New York, for a more faithful and devoted band I never saw."

Sister Elizabeth remained only six or seven months in Rochester, but so strong an impres-

sion did her devotion to her duty, and her religious manner make on the people there, that her memory is still held in benediction.

In the same year* that she left New York city, it became necessary to divide the number of orphans then in the old asylum. This had been under consideration for some time before Sister Elizabeth's departure. To execute this project, an eligible site and extensive grounds were obtained for the purpose at the corner of Fifty-First Street and Fifth Avenue.† Through the zeal and energy of the friends of the orphans, and the generosity of the city corporation, who leased the ground to the managers at a nominal rent, a spacious and elegant structure was about to be built for the boys. At the same time, a new hospital was projected. Therefore, a large number of Sisters was asked from the Mother-house at Emmittsburg by the Right Rev. Bishop of New York. He was told in reply that no more could be spared. This, in conjunction with many other circumstances, urged the necessity of having a Mother-house established in New York, to supply the increasing and indeed already pressing wants of the diocese. The

* 1846.

† Many of the following particulars have been gleaned from a piece entitled "The Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul," which appeared in the *Freeman's Journal* in 1855.

Right Rev. Bishop wrote on the subject to the Rev. Louis Deluol, Superior-General of the Sisters of Charity at Emmittsburg. He not only assented to the proposition, but even wished the sisters to remain, in order to continue the charitable institutions that had been so long established, and which had been productive of so much good. He assured the sisters, his blessing would remain with them, and in a general circular addressed to the Sisters of Charity, then in the diocese of New York, he dispensed such as were disposed to remain, from the vow of obedience to their former superior.* These papers, sent to Bishop Hughes, came to hand December 8, 1846; the day on which our Holy Mother, the Church, celebrates the feast of the Immaculate Conception. The Bishop, therefore, chose this feast for the renovation of vows and for the general feast of the community. To this happy choice under God, the venerable Father McElroy of the Society of Jesus attributes what he calls: "the unparalleled progress of the community."

The Right Rev. Bishop communicated the

---

* Archbishop Eccleston threw the whole weight of his authority in favor of the sisters being allowed to remain in New York. Had it not been for the dispensation granted, every sister would have gone to Emmittsburg, at the voice of obedience.

contents of the letter he had received from Father Deluol to Sister Elizabeth.

NEW YORK,
December 11, 1846.

DEAR SISTER:

"The sisters who have chosen to return to St. Joseph's will have all left on Monday. Those who have preferred to remain for our diocesan Establishment will, I trust, be numerous enough to save our asylums, at least, from falling. I have no disposition to disturb, in the least, the asylums of Albany, Utica, and Rochester. But the sisters in any one of them, who, under the right of choice presented by the Very Rev. Father Deluol on the one side and myself on the other, choose to join the community which I am about to organize for this diocese, I wish to come to New York as soon as possible—in the supposition, however, that the asylum will not suffer from their departure. Let each sister so choosing, borrow enough to pay travelling expenses, and I shall cause it to be repaid on her arrival.

"Your faithful friend and father in Xt.,

"† JOHN HUGHES, Bishop, N. Y."

Sister Elizabeth's resolution was taken at once. The maxim of St. Vincent de Paul, "Never to abandon one good work under the pretense of undertaking new ones," was firmly engraven on

her mind. Yet of all the sisters then in the diocese, I think not one had so much reason to cling to St. Joseph's. No one can doubt her attachment to her Community in her Valley Home, and the holy associations and remembrances of her early days in religion. At St. Joseph's, she had met again and again, those holy and eminent personages, Archbishops Carroll, Neale, Mareschel, Fathers Dubois, Dubourg, David, and Bruté, and above all, the saintly and venerated Mother Seton. She was herself regarded at St. Joseph's as a link, closely joining the present days of the Community with those of its infancy. But her orphans, were they to be left to the care of hired servants for at least some few years? Were her own children to be deserted, and by her free choice? Had obedience called her away from the diocese, no one can doubt, but that she would have received the order in a perfect spirit of submission. In remaining, she had one thing to fear, which, to her humble mind, was secondary only to deserting the orphans. The confidence with which Bishop Hughes had ever honored her made her fear, that he would call her to New York to organize the new community. We find that she early exerted herself to call attention to the ability which Sister Jerome

had already evinced for governing a community. Her fears, were, indeed, well grounded.

It is a saying, recognized by the saints of God, that "where there is less of nature there is more of grace." Therefore, we may not doubt but that God was with this new community from the beginning. Even now, the sisters of those days cannot speak of St. Joseph's, and its hallowed recollections, without betraying the strongest emotions. Every sister was advised by Father Deluol, that it was her duty to weigh her decision before God, but consultations with one another were wisely prohibited. Thirty-three sisters, including the few occupying prominent positions remained. They viewed the matter in a light that precluded their entertaining any settled thoughts of leaving, since, if too many were to leave the establishments, free schools, pay schools, and asylums must go down. The Bishop, in much perplexity, had convened the sisters and informed them that he awaited their decision, and at the same time, assured them that he should make no arrangements to get substitutes, even if all purposed leaving, until after they had gone. "Then," said he, "I will, after viewing the wreck of charity you leave behind you, go forth into the streets, and engage the first persons I

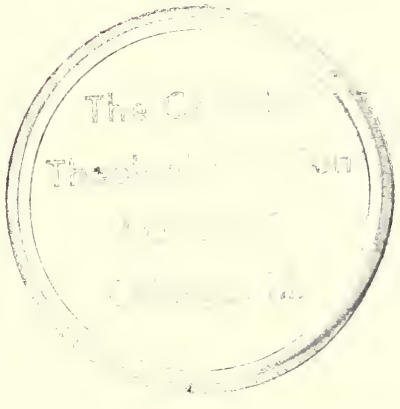
can, to care for the desolate orphans and the poor."

While the matter was pending, the Right Rev. Bishop* remained firm in his trust that God would enable him to uphold those institutions which were so dear to Him. Yet, he felt the organizing of a new community was but an experiment, for at that time, but one Community of Sisters of Charity, independent of St. Joseph's, existed. This was the one in Kentucky, of which we have already spoken.† Now, several thriving communities have been established with separate Mother houses, but united by a strict bond of charity. One was planted in Cincinnati by the Most Rev. Archbishop Purcell, and others in Montreal by Bishop Bourget, in Nova Scotia by the late Archbishop Walsh, and in Newark, New Jersey, by the Right Rev. Bishop Bayley. The Right Rev. Bishop of New York was circumstanced very much like St. Vincent de Paul when the ladies of his association of charity thought to withdraw their assistance from the poor foundlings. We cannot for

---

* He was afterwards often heard to say, that he could not rest at night, so anxious was he for the future of the new Mother-house. He insisted on the purchase of Fonthill, and was wont to direct improvements there.

† See Life of Mother Seton, p. 355, for a sketch of the rise and progress of this community in Kentucky.



VERY REV. FATHER STARRS, V. G.

bear quoting the almost parallel difficulties, as related in "L'Esprit de St. Vincent de Paul."* The saint had convened meetings in 1648, to decide whether the ladies of that assembly would continue to aid the Daughters of Charity, by their surplus wealth, and thus enable them to discharge the duties of their mission towards the poor foundlings. He began by representing the reasons for and against the measure. On one side, he urged that they were free to act as they judged most proper; while on the other, he made them see that by their charitable care, they had already preserved the lives of a great number of children, who would, otherwise, have been lost for time and perhaps for eternity; that these innocents in learning to speak, had learned to know and serve God. . . . . "Compassion and Charity" he said, "made you adopt these little creatures as your children; you have been their mothers according to grace. . . See now, if you will abandon them. Cease to be their mothers to become at present their judges; . . . . it is time to pronounce their sentence, and to know if you will still exercise mercy towards them!"

After mature deliberation, as we have already

---

* Pages 84 and 85.

remarked, thirty-three of the sisters, who were then in the diocese, concluded to remain and to devote themselves to the work in New York.

The names of the sisters, who remained, are as follows:

Sister Elizabeth Boyle,
" Magdalen Shirley,
" Mary Veronica Goff,
" Ellen Timon,
" Angela Hughes,
" Susan Knott,
" Mary Jerome Ely,
" Ann Borromeo Obermeyer,
" Mary Constantia Hull,
" Mary Domitilla Fanning,
" Mary Basilia McCann,
" Mary Philipine Beaven,
" Williamanna Hickey,
" Mary Francinia Bigham,
" Mary Hickey,
" Mary Frances Wallace,
" Mary Arsenia Burchill,

Sister Mary Editha Barry,
" Frances Borgia Taylor,
" Mary Regina Lawless,
" Mary Cornelia Finney,
" Mary Valeria Roan,
" Mary Beatrice Healy,
" Mary Ambrose Lessen,
" Mary Josepha Hadden,
" Mary Ulrica O'Reilly,
" Mary Catherine Livingston,
" Mary Calista Delany,
" Ann Assissium Bird,
" Mary Pelagia Boyd,
" Mary Anna Connolly,
" Mary Vincentia Conklin,
" M. Alphonse McDonald.

The venerable John McElroy, S. J., was consulted at Emmittsburg by the Rev. Superior-General, Father Deluol, and by Mother Etienne Hall, who was at that time the presiding mother, concerning the expediency of allowing the sisters to remain in New York. He told me himself, that he advised them by all means to permit them to remain. The blessings God has poured down upon the community, have caused this holy religious, so well and favorably

known throughout our country, to declare very frequently: "It was evidently the will of God." His holy councils, his frequent visits to the Mother-house in New York, his unfailing interest in all that concerns its success, and above all, the spiritual retreats he has given annually (excepting two years),* ever since its establishment, have thoroughly identified him with the Community, in which he is deeply revered. He began to give these retreats to the sisters the year Mother Seton died, and has given them, in all, about forty-two years.

The strictest bond of charity and good will unites the Communities of St. Joseph's and Mount St. Vincent. Both use the same Meditations, follow the same Rule, and have the same Manuals of Direction. The Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, for the use of the new Community, were obtained from the Very Rev. Superior-General in Paris, in 1878, by his Eminence, Cardinal McCloskey.

---

* He was chaplain in the U. S. Army, in Mexico, for these two years.

CHAPTER XV.

Retreat of the Community—Conferences of Bishop Hughes—His Exalted Idea of Vocation—The Necessity of Humility and Simplicity—On the Observance of Rules—On Detachment from the World—On holy Poverty—On holy Fear—On the Life of a Sister.

PREVIOUS to the recurrence of the feast of St. Vincent de Paul, the Right Rev. Bishop assembled the sisters from all parts of the diocese, at the Prince Street asylum, New York, to give them the exercises of their annual retreat of eight days.

The services of a Father * of the Society of Jesus were secured for the occasion, but the Bishop gave a series of familiar instructions at eleven o'clock each day, on the Rules of the Institute.

Only an imperfect sketch remains of them. This was hurriedly taken down at the time, yet it is well worth preserving.

After his Lordship had read with impressive earnestness, the first article of the Rule, he said: "Dear sisters, the end of your vocation is not only sublime and exalted, *it is divine.* By it you are raised to a co-partnership with the Son of God. The difference between your manner of life and

* Rev. Chas. Petitdemange, S. J.

that of inclosed religious is great. But, let me assure you, that God is not honored by material bars and gratings, in themselves; they only indicate a separation in body—a detachment from the things of earth. They are, in a certain sense, a physical protection, a limit beyond which the religious is not permitted to go; therefore, nuns are not exposed to the dangers to which you are. I would almost term it a kind of daring in a female consecrated to God, to venture forth as you do into the enemy's camp, in order to fulfil the noble end of your holy society; yet, if you are faithful, your reward and your merit will be much greater. The care necessary to preserve your virtue unsullied, notwithstanding your intercourse with the world, is very great. You should be continually on the watch, and like the traveller, who every evening brushes off the dust from his garments after his day's journey, a Sister of Charity should brush from her soul the dust of the world. By your position, you must either give light to the world by your good example, or be affected, either more or less, by the contagious influence of the world. You must either communicate virtue to it, or be affected by its spirit. Humility, simplicity, and charity are the three virtues particularly recommended to you. They are

said to constitute your essential spirit, and are placed in the very beginning of your Rule. Hence, the first article of your Rule gives some idea of the grand plan and scope of what is to follow. Humility is the foundation of all, and our souls must be deeply rooted in it, grounded in the real knowledge that we are incapable of doing anything of ourselves; humility, real, true humility, not a counterfeit appearance of it, for pride may conceal itself under an assumed appearance of this virtue. Yes, pride can take every shape and bearing, like that poisonous insect in the East, which is said to impart its own tint or color to every leaf it lights upon. You must then begin by acquiring this virtue. If there is any flaw in the foundation, the superstructure is in danger; if you have not the basis of humility to build upon, apply at once to its acquisition. Simplicity is so nearly allied to humility, that it cannot exist without it. This virtue keeps the eye of the soul bent on God; makes it candid and artless like a child's, free from guile, free from dissimulation, a stranger to the tortuous ways of the world. The attention is fixed on one bright, heavenly point, and rests calmly upon it. If slanders and reproaches fasten on such a soul, it remains tranquil and serene, unconsciously basking in its own light

and warmth, being raised above the things of this lower world. The model proposed, my dear sisters, in your rules, for your imitation, is not a great saint, nor a bright angel,—no, it is Jesus Christ, Himself—you must strive to imitate Him though at a remote distance; you must keep the eye of your soul fixed on this divine Model, and endeavor to conceive as just an idea as you possibly can of this infinitely perfect Being."

Speaking of the observance of rules, the bishop remarked: "How exactly should you observe your rules, since they conduce to so high and noble an end; they are your shield against dangers and temptations. Charity! holy charity should be possessed by you, and you should strive for that unbounded charity, of which your Model gives you the example. Love God above all things and your neighbor as yourself for His sake. Love your neighbor not through self-interest—for the satisfaction that you take in his society, nor on account of certain natural qualities which please you, but for God's sake, and because he is loved by God." He begged the sisters to renew their fervor in God's service, and to never lose sight of the first motives which had induced them to embrace a religious life. He reminded them in forcible language, that on their exactness and fidelity to

every point of rule, would depend the observance of those same rules in those who would follow them in their holy vocation. On the second day, he spoke further on the three virtues which should be so conspicuous in every Sister of Charity. He said that they were the spring or source of all that is good and meritorious; that it was necessary to possess them in order to observe the rules and other exterior practices. "Now," said he, "as a stream would dry up, unless constantly fed by a spring, so if your perfection has not its source or spring in these three virtues, it will be in vain for you to observe the exterior practices of the religious life; your soul will be dried up. The soul of a sister who possesses not these virtues would resemble a bird, that would try to unfold its pinions to soar aloft, whilst it was fastened down to the earth. If your heart is not united to God by these virtues, little ties, perhaps secret ones, will fasten you to the earth. The most worldly heart may dwell in the deepest recesses of a religious solitude, concealed under a religious habit. Your holy father seems to have supposed, that the aspirants to your holy order should be already deeply grounded in humility, simplicity, and charity. The saints did no more than you are called upon to practice by your holy rules."

He then read the article of the rules which requires the sisters to abhor the maxims of the world, and to embrace those of Jesus Christ, and dwelt at some length on the word, *abhor*. "To do this," he said, "the world must be banished from the heart, for then, indeed, there will be room for God within it." Repeating the words, he said: "They will *abhor*. What is the will but a gift of God to us, of which He gives us the sole command and direction, in a certain sense, rarely doing more, than to sweetly attract our will to a comformity with His divine will? Who, then, can lay obligations upon our will and so compass matters that we shall obey? Yet, if the virtues of humility, simplicity, and charity, are possessed by the soul, I can then see how quickly it will conform its will to the will of the Beloved. You must embrace the maxims of Jesus Christ, those maxims which teach both interior and exterior mortification. You are even to love the lowest and meanest occupations, such as are only fit for the stupid and ignorant,—to wish for, desire and love such. Though this demands much perfection, yet you can acquire it. By what way have the saints attained to such great glory and happiness? By no other, surely, than that which your rules

point out to you. How many hidden saints have borne the name of which you are so proud, and have gained heaven in the way in which you have to walk. We read of one sister, who solicited duties the most repugnant to nature, in the discharge of which she met with nothing but reproaches and insults, being spit upon by a miserable infidel on whom she was lavishing her care. Pitying the poor wretch, she prayed to God for him, and treasured the humiliation which she had received in her heart, desiring that it should be known to none but God, since she both loved and embraced it." Speaking of poverty, he said: "Let me warn you, dear sisters, that as riches and prosperity are the reward of industry to the worldling, they are the ruin of a religious community. You are only the stewards in the household of our Lord. You are required to be free from all attachments to persons, places, or things. To be so, you must be ready at the command of your superiors to fly to the most remote parts of the earth, to take the lowest or highest place in the community. Your affection for your parents or relatives must be purified and sanctified by religion. Now, can the heart be free from all attachments, if God does not hold possession of it? Indeed, it

cannot—but if He fill the heart, then there is no room for anything else. While you must be disposed to endure scoffings, contradictions, and persecutions, you have never yet been called upon to experience them. In Europe, even when other religious had to flee from their convents, or were dragged to the scaffold, the Sisters of Charity passed unmolested, their very vocation affording them protection. Where, then, can you find reproaches and contradictions? You will find some trifling ones among yourselves, perhaps, since even the saints are a trial to one another in this life. While, my dear sisters, you might be able to bear in patience and even with a smiling countenance, the reproaches of a crowd that might meet you in the streets, their insults and scoffings, and even to be pelted by an infuriated mob, yet you may find it hard to receive even a merited word of reproof, a slight, or a contradiction. In the first case you would be seen and praised, but in private, you would be able to endure far less. If this is true of anyone before me, let her be sure that her soul is not in a healthy state; God does not possess her heart.

You are told that you must follow Christ, how will you do so? Certainly, not by carrying only a part of your cross and dragging the rest

after you,—that way of bearing the cross draws you to the earth. Take up your cross generously, and you will receive a hundred-fold in this life, and eternal glory in the next. Dear sisters, remember that the present time of fervor and of strong resolutions will pass, and your souls will imperceptibly relax, little by little, if your hearts are not devoid of all and every affection to created things, so as sweetly to repose in the bosom of God. You have not, as have poor worldlings, the care of providing for your wants. Even the good Christian, who lives in the world, is not exempt from temporal solicitude, since he has to shift his course by trying first one plan and then, perhaps, another. Those in the Community, who have been appointed to provide all necessaries, must not evince too much anxiety, even should they be reduced to such straits as to be unable to provide for the next meal; they must abandon all to God who never forsakes those who trust in Him. The boundary between enough and a superfluity, is a very nice subject for calculation. We should guard what we have in charge with the hand of a miser, yet provide a sufficiency, nevertheless, for our Lord's household. You must see that nothing goes to waste; your economy should be like that of our Blessed

Lord, Who could have multiplied bread again and again, yet, Who ordered the fragments to be gathered up lest they should go to waste. You must not desire a superfluity, nor a prosperity accompanied with riches. The Jews, the people of God, as soon as they prospered, forgot the hand that had rescued them, and rebelled against God. All the founders of religious communities, have feared too great prosperity, —Sts. Ignatius of Loyola, Francis de Sales, Alphonsus Ligouri, and others. The first prayed that his Society might never be free from persecution;—the second, that his daughters might always *feel* the poverty they had vowed; and the third, that his Order might always be the last in the Church, and subject to contempt. Think you, dear sisters, that these great saints formed their desires without consideration? No, the light of the Holy Spirit directed them. These holy men wished to provide skilful pilots for their respective communities, and looked upon this as the best means to prevent their striking against rocks. A spirit of poverty, was the primitive spirit of the Church, as we learn from this sentence: "They shall put all things in common, as the primitive Christians did." As separate members of the community, you are not permitted to

hold anything as your own individual property. Is any member to be considered apart from the Community?—No, your Community is one body composed of many members. Then it follows, that the spirit of poverty should belong to the Community as a body, and to every member of the Community. During the first ages of the Church, up to three hundred and fifteen years after Christ, no scandals were given by its members. It was a season of persecutions,—one was hurried to the block, another to the scaffold or to the torture. But when the Emperor Constantine became a Christian, the spirit of ambition and avarice crept into hearts. Perhaps, there is very little danger of your conceiving desires of wealth as individuals, still under pretext of advancing the interests of your Community, you may show too much anxiety. It may be thought that I do not show sufficient anxiety about your Community while now in its infancy. I have no fears, for it will be the same with a Sister of Charity as with a good priest,—a good priest never wants for the necessaries of life. The wants of a Sister of Charity should not go beyond what the strict observance of her vow of poverty admits of. You should observe the greatest simplicity in your dress, and the greatest frugality at your re-

pasts, for the servant desires not to be better treated than his master;—the poor are your masters, therefore, you must not wish for anything better than they have. Oh! would that I could speak to you, as those holy men who are now with God spoke to Mother Seton and her fervent companions on the red banks of Emmittsburg! You have not the lonely feeling that she must have experienced then, when deprived as she was of the society of all whom she had hitherto held dear, cut from them, and that in the most heart-rending manner. Oh! with what humility and submission did she listen to the voice of God, that spoke within her soul. How different is your position from hers! You are surrounded by friends, hence you should fear. You are told, that you must possess nothing, but in possessing so many friends, are you not rich? Fear! my dear sisters, for let me warn you on this subject—whence is it that so many angels of the sanctuary have fallen, and have become like dark clouds without rain? Is it not owing to their having had too many friends? They have forgotten their singleness of being, it seems. Have you stronger graces than they? I know not that the Church imparts to any community stronger graces than those they have received. While I hope to see your Community

as a clear stream, cleansing, elevating the corrupt world, I would rather see the diocese deprived of your services, than to see you a wealthy community. You need merely a home for your infirm and aged sisters, nothing more is necessary. If the spirit of poverty is deeply rooted in your hearts, the observance of your rules regarding your food, dress, furniture, and houses, will be easy. The good sisters in France preserve their primitive spirit of poverty, as taught them by their holy founder. In their Mother-house we see the true spirit of poverty, in their clean, but uncovered floors, their wooden chairs, and poor beds. In everything in the house, we see the proof of their true poverty. So, with the sisters going forth to visit the poor sick, they go, not as from a flower garden to a desert, but from humble dwellings to the humble homes of the poor. Hence, they feel at home with the poor, because as Sisters of Charity, they are poor and willingly rank themselves with the poor ;—if it were otherwise, they might feel as if they were condescending. Even in sickness you are to remember your obligations to practice poverty, and your lives should image forth the different stages of your Saviour's life ; His active life while you are able to discharge your daily duties, and His suffering life when you are in

your bed of pain. St. Bernard speaks of two kinds of martyrdom. The first he describes, as being one that is quickly consummated, as when one is put to death for his faith ; the other, a life-long martyrdom, as when one dies inch by inch, under the continued friction of the rule. He considers the latter species of martyrdom as the more meritorious. You are told, my dear sisters, that after you have provided what is strictly necessary for yourselves, you are to be very exact with regard to the surplus remaining in your hands, since nothing must be wasted. You are only trustees or stewards in God's household, therefore, any neglect on your part under this head, would be a violation of the trust reposed in you, and render you guilty of squandering the property of the poor. Those who have charge of asylums should be very careful not to let anything go to waste, since all they have is the patrimony of the poor orphans. The surplus of all ecclesiastical and religious Orders belongs to the poor. Why did the English nation pass over to heresy? The love of riches, the spirit of avarice, having crept into the bosom of some of the prelates of the Church, it contaminated *them*, but not the doctrine, of which, indeed, they should have been devoted teachers, and so gave rise to the so-called Reformation."

CHAPTER XVI.

First Officers of the new Community—Sister Elizabeth Chosen Mother—Recognition by the Holy See—Opening of the Novitiate—Mount St. Vincent Established by Mother Elizabeth—Poverty of the New Community.

THE first election of officers of the new Community was held on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, December 8, 1846.

Sister Elizabeth Boyle was chosen Mother Superior. Sister Mary Angela Hughes (Sister to the Right Rev. Bishop of New York), Assistant Mother, Sister Williamanna Hickey (Sister to the Venerable Rev. John Hickey, Baltimore, former Superior of the Sisters of Charity at Emmittsburg), Treasurer, and Sister M. Jerome Ely, Procuratrix. The Right Rev. Bishop* presided on this occasion. Rev. William Starrs, at that time Pastor of St. Mary's Church in New York, and afterwards Vicar-General of the Archdiocese, was appointed the Reverend Superior-General of the new Community. That prudence, firmness, charity,

* The only restriction imposed by the Bishop in the choice of officers, was that no relative of his should be named for the highest office on this occasion.

and evenness of mind, which were so conspicuous in him, in his intercourse with all, caused his exertions for the good of the Community to be crowned with success, and benediction.

The Sisters of Charity were now constituted a local community in the diocese of New York, under the title of "The Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul." On the 23d of January, 1849, the Society was incorporated under this title. A few months after the organization of the Community, the following grant was received from Rome.

Ex Audientia Sanctissimi Habita die 20 Junii, 1847.

"Ad humillimas preces R. P. D. Joannis Hughes, Episcopi Novi Eboraci, SSmus. Dominus Noster Pius. Divina Providentia P. P. IX., referente me infrascripto Sacræ Congregationis de Propaganda Fide officiali, benigne impertitus est Communitati Sororum Caritatis Novi Eboraci institutæ et ab ipso Episcopo nunc dependenti omnes ac singulas facultates, indulgentias, aliasque Spirituales gratias jam alias concessas Communitati earumdem Sororum Emmittsburgi erectæ. Contrariis quibuscumque non obstantibus.

Datum Romæ ex ædibus Sacræ Congregationis, die et anno quibus supra.

Gratis sine ulla omnino solutione quocumque titulo.*

[L. S.] J. B. PALMA, S. Cis. Officialis."

The Plenary Indulgences, etc., referred to, are those granted by Popes Pius VI. and VII. to the Sisters of Charity, in whatever place they may be, either in France or Poland, to which many additions were made by His Holiness Pope Gregory XVI.

The novitiate was regularly opened at St. Mary's, 35 East Broadway, on the 13th of February, 1847. Sister Mary Aloysia, Sister Mary Rose, second superioress of the Sisters of Charity in Halifax, Sister Mary Xavier, present

---

(TRANSLATION.)

* Audience granted by our most Holy Father, Pope Pius IX., on the 20th of June, 1847.

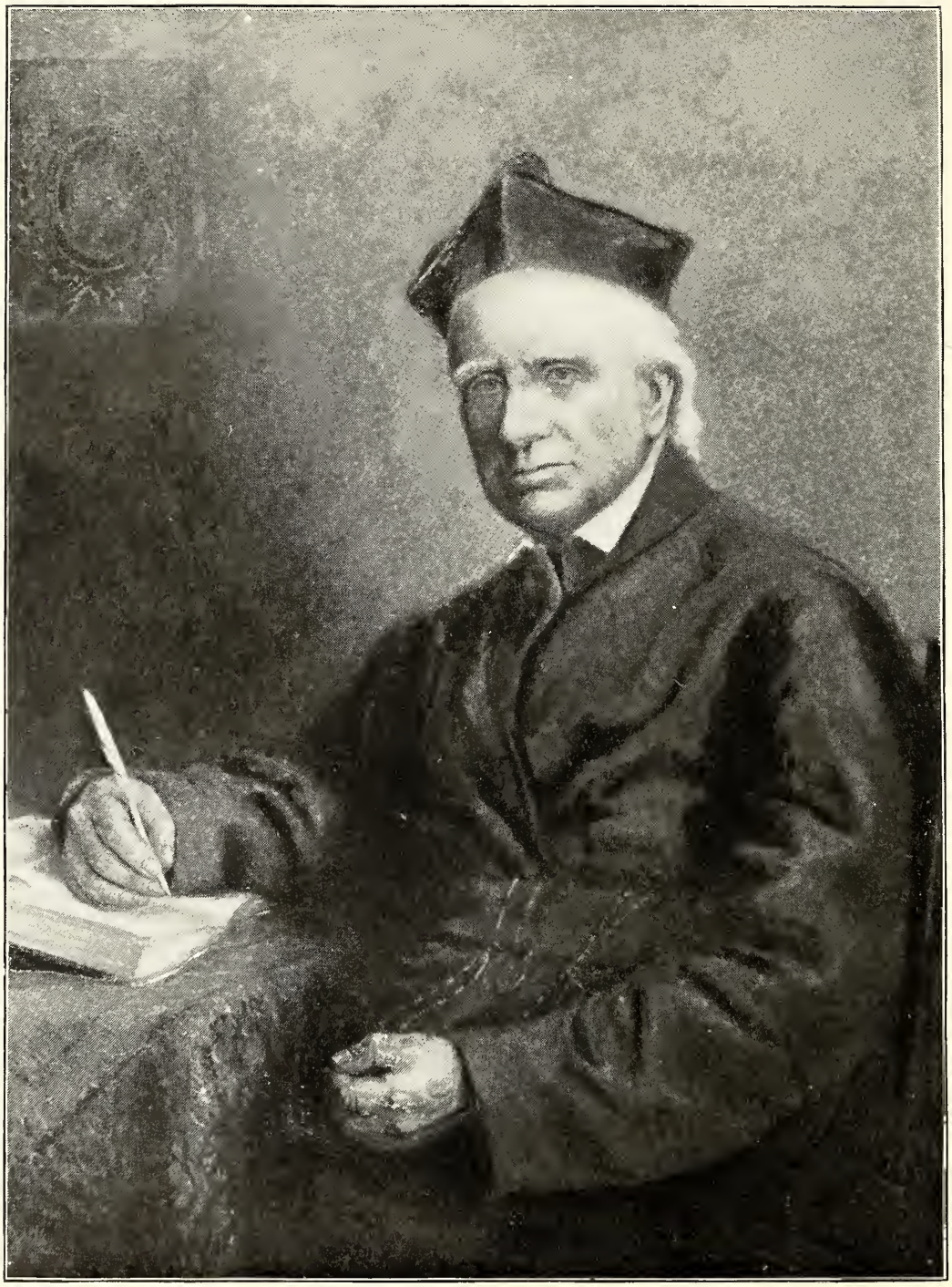
At the request of the Right Rev. John Hughes, Bishop of New York, our Most Holy Lord, Pius IX., by divine Providence, Pope (I the undersigned, official of the sacred congregation, *de Propaganda Fide*, acting solicitor), graciously granted to the Community of the Sisters of Charity, established in New York, and now subject to the immediate jurisdiction of the bishop, all and each of the privileges, indulgences, and other spiritual graces already elsewhere granted to the Community of the same sisters, established at Emmittsburg. Anything, whatsoever, to the contrary, notwithstanding.

Given at Rome, in the palace of the aforesaid sacred congregation on the day, and in the year above mentioned. Gratis, etc.

(L. S.) J. B. PALMA, Official of the S. C.

Later, the Most Rev. Archbishop appended the following approbation:

Nos, Archiepiscopus Neo—Eboracensis, vidimus facultates, Indulgnetias cœterasque spirituales gratias jam alias Communitati Sororum



REV. FATHER McELROY, S. J.

superioress of the Sisters of Charity in the diocese of Newark, were the first who received the novices' habit in the new community. Sister Mary Hickey, was the mistress of novices. The Right Rev. Bishop purposed to give the novices instructions semi-weekly, but his onerous duties obliged him to relinquish this work to others. The novices are not admitted to their holy vows "until after a trial of two years (which may be extended to five), in order that so long a practice of the duties they wish to impose upon themselves may facilitate their perfect discharge, and prove that they are not above the strength of nature."

Soon after, the council of the Community resolved to seek an eligible site for a new

---

Caritatis concessas, et nunc in earumdam gratiam vi rescripti Sanctissimi Domini Nostri Pii Divina Providentia P. P. IX., Romae dati die 20 Junii, anno 1847, confirmatas.

Quas omnes, in quantum ad Nos et ad Nostram Diœcesim spectat adprobamus. Datum Neo Eboraci 24 die Octobri, anno 1855.

(L. S.) †JOANNES, Archiepiscopus Neo-Eboracensis.

(TRANSLATION.)

The Archbishop of New York, have examined the privileges, indulgences, and other spiritual graces already, elsewhere granted to the community of the Sisters of Charity, and now confirmed in favor of the same sisters, by the rescript of our Most Holy Lord Pius IX., by Divine Providence, Pope, done at Rome, and bearing date, 20th of June, 1847.

All which we approve, inasmuch as it pertaineth to us and for our diocese. Done at New York, the 24th day of October, 1853.

† John, Archbishop of New York.

Mother-house and academy. Rev. Father Starrs, Mother Elizabeth, Sisters Mary Angela, Williamanna, and Mary Jerome, set out in quest of one, but met with no success. Mother Elizabeth mentioned their perplexity to a Mr. Tighe Davy, an elderly gentleman of sterling piety, and possessed of much zeal for the advancement of religion. He informed her soon after, that there was a handsome property for sale, situated on an eminence overlooking Harlem, Astoria, and Yorkville, and known on all State maps as the McGowan Pass. The place is of some historic repute, too, as the main building is known to have been Washington's headquarters for awhile.* The officers of the Community went out to visit the premises. The place was in so neglected a state, that none of the sisters would get out of the carriage, except Mother Elizabeth and Sister Mary Jerome. The front hall was flooded with water, and everything presented a most uninviting appearance. Both Mother and Sister Mary Jerome judged the location a desirable one, and succeeded, but not without some difficulty, in making the other sister officers view it in the

* A large Franklin stove, then in one of the parlors, but which has been removed to the new Mount St. Vincent, is said to have been there in the General's time.

same light. Mr. Davy, with characteristic activity, at once secured the title to the premises. Sister Mary Jerome went out in April to have the house prepared for the sisterhood, and on the 30th of the same month, 1847, Mother Elizabeth bade a reluctant farewell to her dear orphanage in Prince Street, over which she had presided nearly twenty-five years, and accompanied by Sister Susan, set out for Mount St. Vincent. A chapel was fitted up immediately, and the Right Rev. Bishop, assisted by the Rev. Mr. Wheeler, offered the first Mass on the 2d of May. The gratified Bishop made a few remarks on the occasion, of which the following is the substance: "My dear sisters, as I am pressed for time this morning, I can say only a few words. I need not delay to bless the house, as no blessing can go beyond that you have received, of having the Holy Sacrifice offered for the first time on the altar here erected. Dear Sisters, and you, my dear children who aspire to be Sisters of Charity, you are like the little grain of mustard, small in the eyes of those who see no farther than to-morrow, and not even that far, but, great in the eyes of God. You all intend this house to be one of prayer, for God says: 'My house shall be called a house of prayer.' Let your

prayer be humble, fervent and constant; have nothing in view, but the love and service of God, doing in all things His most holy will. You will thus consecrate this house by your fervor, and you will prosper. From this humble beginning, God will be glorified and served, if you be faithful to the graces He will dispense to you; and that you may be so, is the blessing I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

The new home was certainly an uninviting spot on the day of Mother Elizabeth's arrival. But now, the living presence of Jesus Christ, the eternal Sun of Justice, illumined it, and from His altar throne, He united the hearts of His daughters in one firm, determined, self-sacrificing purpose, to honor His Holy Name, and advance His work. The house, as it then stood, was a small frame building containing only four rooms and an attic. The southwest parlor had been set aside as a chapel, and many pious remembrances cluster round those days of destitution and obscurity. So dear did the little wooden altar become, that it is still preserved at the Mother-house, as a sacred memorial of the past, and as the witness of the first vows of the Community.

The extension of the house for the public

good, was at once resolved on, but the Community was in very great poverty. While the foundations were being laid for the wing on the north side, Mr. Michael O'Connor, who had already proved himself a devoted friend of the community, went one evening to Mother Elizabeth to get wages for the workmen. The good Mother found she had but one dollar remaining in her purse, which she laughingly handed to him, frankly avowing her poverty. The poor man, not having any funds with him, was obliged to go out to a neighbor to borrow some. On returning to the city, he made the trustees of St. Patrick's Cathedral acquainted with this state of things, and they, with the Right Rev. Bishop's approbation, lent the good Mother, so well known to them by her long years of patient toil in their midst, a sum sufficient to relieve her from her embarrassment.

Mother Elizabeth never forgot her dear orphans. She often visited them, at the asylum, and used to felicitate the sisters, on their happy employment among the orphans.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Bishop visits the new Establishment—Mother Elizabeth's daily Life at Mount St. Vincent—Happiness of the Sisters—Opening of the Academy Mount St. Vincent—Rules for pupils.

THE Bishop frequently visited the new establishment, and was accustomed to rally Mother Elizabeth in a pleasant way on her longings to be with her dear orphans. On one occasion in spite of herself, the tears came to her eyes, and even rolled down her cheeks. "Why Mother," said the Bishop, "I am ashamed of you!" "I am ashamed of myself, Bishop!" she replied. Yet, she was a devoted superioress, and ready for every exigency, for she was not one to be dejected at the difficulties of her situation. But her humble heart could hardly brook the thought, that she was to be the guiding spirit, under God, of the new Community.

The energies of her nature soon displayed themselves. There was much to be done before the new place could bear the name of an academy. An immense rock so screened the front door of the house from the street, that a young lady, who came to be a postulant, drove by the house, little thinking a projected educa-

tional establishment could be in the rear of that boulder. The community was so poor, that it was some time, before it could bear the necessary expense of having the rock blasted; and when it was, the building was so jarred, on account of its close proximity, that the tabernacle was displaced.

The sisters of those days speak in raptures of the humble, cheerful, kind, and affectionate manner in which Mother Elizabeth lured them on in the ways of sacrifice and daily duty. Her bedstead was the only one in the house. But this luxury was invariably resigned to any sister that might be at all ill, for Mother most willingly accommodated herself to every inconvenience, that any of the members of her fervent household might be called on to experience. Her discriminating eye watched with a mother's tenderness over those, whose labors she feared might be beyond their strength. She assisted at the ironings herself. The table for this work was none other than a board, supported at either end by a barrel, and placed out in the back yard. The sisters heated their irons by a furnace kindled outside. They were obliged to have recourse to this expedient, as there was but one small stove in the house. This stove was so small, that dinner had to be cooked

several times each day, that all might be served. Father Wheeler, who was the chaplain from May, 1847, until July, 1848, resided in a small frame house at the foot of the garden, which was so damp as to be hardly tenantable. The foundations were soon laid of the fine stone building at the right side of the gate entrance, designed for the chaplain's residence.

Mother Elizabeth encouraged and animated the sisters at their duties during the day, more by her example than by her words. During the evening recreation, she would recount to them the many like meritorious toils and hardships the sisters had experienced in the beginning at Emmittsburg, telling them, that she herself had assisted in carrying tubs of mortar to the builders. The sisters had not the convenience of Croton water at Mount St. Vincent until 1851.* All the water for culinary purposes had to be brought from a spring at a great distance, and this task formed very laborious work for the sisters. Mother kept a special watch over the younger members amid their various duties. From time to time, she would kindly take their hands within her own, to feel if they were not hardened

* Mr. Dennis Mullens, of New York, was chiefly instrumental in procuring this great boon to the Community. I find it gratefully recorded in the Community Record.

by the work, and would often ask them; "If they had not too much to do?" Her own generosity put it out of the power of the enemy to suggest that she spared herself. A sister tells me, that when she was going to petition to become a member of the Community, she found Mother showing a novice how to scrub down the front steps. She says: Although Mother was scrubbing away, yet the calm dignity of manner she evinced, on seeing a stranger approach, made a very forcible impression on her mind.

When it rained, Mother was accustomed to be near the door through which the sisters entered on returning from the wash-house and bake-house. She was thus on the alert, lest they should keep on damp clothing. One of the men in the sisters' employ at this time, used to come home from the city in the evening, in a state of intoxication; and the morning after, would, of course be in a deathlike stupor, and absent from his post. The good Mother knew this before scarcely any one else in the house, and to cover the fault of the unhappy man, and to win him to his duty, she would go out to the stable unknown to any one and do his work. She did this for some time. We do not know whether her charity was rewarded by the reformation of the poor man.

Mother Elizabeth was remarkably self-possessed—self-command seemed natural to her. On the 5th of March, 1848, several sisters had just entered the community carriage to accompany her to the city, when the horse, taking fright before the driver had mounted to his seat, ran down the steep hill north of the Mother-house. At a sudden turn in the road, the carriage was upset and the sisters thrown out. Mother Elizabeth gave no token of alarm, while several of the young sisters, terrified and jarred, seemed almost bereft of their senses. Mother was so anxious about them, so earnest in her inquiries, that it was the general impression, that she was uninjured. It was not until the next day, when the bruises on her face revealed themselves, that it became known that she had sustained any injury. The young sisters were then made sensible of their thoughtlessness, in having made so much ado about their hurts, when probably Mother had been more injured than any of them. In this, there is much to admire in Mother, for she was tenderly loved by all her sisters. Their solicitude naturally turned to her first,—but she had skilfully withdrawn all attention from herself by evincing so much real anxiety for her companions.

Notwithstanding all the difficulties and priva-

tions they experienced, the sisters, who were at the Mother-house then, declared to me that they were never so happy, as in those days of labor and trial. The benign influence of the good Mother Elizabeth made them look upon every hardship as a mark of the special favor of God. These lines written by Mother Seton in 1814, and copied by Mother, and presented to one of the sisters give evidence to the good spirit existing.

"Through many tribulations to meet in our eternal rest."

"My Saviour, Thy Cross for those who love and follow Thee, the portion of the soul that loves Thee best."

"I know whilst I bear it, Thy infinite goodness is ordaining all things with strength and sweetness to combine together for my greater good."

"O! to my last sigh, let Thy will be my all; then the coming eternity, an everlasting smile."

In the September of the same year the new wing was completed. The distribution of premiums at St. Joseph's school had been purposely delayed, till the opening day at Mount St. Vincent, where it was to take place. The 13th of September, 1847, had been selected for this event. Every preparation had been made; the

parents of the young ladies had engaged carriages, and the Right Rev. Bishop, Father Starrs, and a number of Reverend gentlemen were also purposing to be present. But the morning became dark, and about ten o'clock, a heavy fall of rain seemed to forbid all thoughts of setting out. Message after message was sent by the kind and anxious parents to the somewhat perplexed Sister Williamanna, who presided over the school. The good sister sent a messenger to the episcopal residence a little after ten, to ask whether it were wise for them go out to the Mount or not. The child had just pulled the bell cord at the door, when the sun shot forth its gladdening rays. Delighted, the good Bishop said: "Tell Sister Williamanna that yon gleaming sun is my answer!" Everything passed off in the most agreeable manner.

From that day, the Academy of Mount St. Vincent dates its local origin, as forty of Sister Williamanna's pupils remained as boarders. Sister Mary Cornelia was the first angel, (a title given to the sister who presides in the study hall,) while Sister Williamanna continued to mould this institution under her experienced hand, until it became, as it now continues to be, one of the most prosperous in the northern States. A sodality of the children of Mary was

established, the rules of which are admirably calculated to form youthful hearts to a solid, practical devotion to the Immaculate Queen of Heaven. At that time concerts were held once in three months; now they are given monthly. At these, the points of the pupils in their various lessons are now, as then, read in the presence of the Mother and assembled class sisters. The young ladies are divided into three grades, those of the first grade, whose conduct has been unexceptionably good during the preceding month, receive a badge of blue ribbon, which they wear over the left shoulder. Light green badges are worn by those who have distinguished themselves in the same way in the second grade, and light pink ones by the juniors of the third grade. These badges indicate that the wearers are models for their companions. The honors publicly given at the Annual Commencements to those young ladies, who have been in every way exemplary, by the awarding of crowns, are great incentives to the young, who, in consequence, endeavor to win the approbation of their teachers in every department. It is hoped that the habit of uniform propriety of manner, being thus formed in early childhood, will last through life. At the first concert, there were twenty pieces of music—vocal, and instru-

mental. Medals of distinction were distributed by Mother Elizabeth, in the different classes for the first time, December 3, 1849. Twelve young ladies were found worthy to receive them from her.

A lady, who was a pupil at the Mount in those days, assures me she never experienced more kindness, than was lavished upon her during a slight illness by Mother Elizabeth, who frequently visited the infirmary at the most inconvenient hours to herself, to see how she was. Young, as she then was, this pupil remarked on many occasions how humble Mother was, and how gentle towards the scholars. As a punishment for having written her copy carelessly, a young lady was sent up to show it to Mother. But as Mother knew very well that the sister, who kept the class was able, unassisted, to induce a pupil to try her best to improve, she examined the book, and said pleasantly to the alarmed and abashed young culprit, that she thought it looked very well indeed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

First Death in the Community—Establishment of a Mission at Halifax—St. Vincent's Hospital opened—Sister Jerome Ely Elected Mother—Mother Elizabeth in Charge of the new Male Orphan Asylum—Mother Elizabeth's Untiring Industry.

A NOVICE Sister, Mary Clare Hourigan, was the first called away to her reward from the Community. She died in sentiments of great piety in 1848. She had frequently remarked to the sisters during her illness that she esteemed it a great happiness to die an humble novice in the Community.

Mother Elizabeth lavished every care on her, and she was the only Sister who died in Mother Elizabeth's time.

In the year 1849, the Right Rev. Bishop Walsh of Halifax, after several efforts, succeeded in obtaining the services of four sisters from Mount St. Vincent, for St. Mary's parish, Halifax. The zealous Bishop had been so impatient for their arrival that after having, as he says in a letter to Mother Elizabeth, sent his Vicar-General, Dr. Connolly to be their escort, during all the hurry of Holy Week, he sent, later, the Rev. Father Hannon, as he had learned that Bishop Hughes

was delaying Dr. Connolly on business. The sisters arrived in Halifax in the early part of May. The Bishop announced their safe arrival in the following letter.

ST. MARY'S, HALIFAX,
13th May, 1849.

"DEAR MOTHER ELIZABETH:

"I received from good Sister Basilia* your very kind favor, and I beg leave to express to you, and to the entire Community my grateful thanks for the *four valuable presents* you have sent us. They arrived early Friday morning after a passage of forty-one hours from Boston. Being unaccustomed to the salt water, they were not good sailors, but they speedily shook off all the *désagréments* of their short voyage. They are all well, thank God, quite well, and apparently happy—as happy as could be expected after having parted from you and the sisters. We have given them a week's repose, to afford them time to settle down in their new house, after which, the schools will open.

"I had the happiness of offering Mass for them this morning in their little chapel—we all wished you were present. The dear sisters are kind enough to say, they will never suffer any one to abuse Halifax again. I need not tell you the

* She directed the Mission.

dreadful name it has in the United States, but I do not think it deserves it.

"We will rely with confidence on the prayers of all the New York sisters, in behalf of our infant institution,* of whose success, with God's assistance, I feel quite sanguine.

"God bless you, dear Mother Elizabeth, and believe me always,

"Most truly yours,

"†WILLIAM, Bishop of Halifax."

In a subsequent letter, dated June 3d, of the same year, he says: "Your dear sisters here are in good health, and in excellent spirits. Their interesting flock increases every day, and already, the gratifying proofs of their valuable superintendence, are visible to the whole public. We have all reason to bless the day on which they arrived in Halifax. I regret I cannot send you a relic of St. Elizabeth, but I feel much pleasure in sending one of St. John Baptist.

---

* This mission continues to thrive. In 1856, the Most Rev. Archbishop Walsh, obtained the consent of the Community in New York, to erect it into a separate Community with a mother-house. Sister M. Basilia was the fisrt Mother. The Archbishop was always a warm friend of the sisterhood, and in death, he left his special benediction to the Community. The sisters at Mount St. Vincent were in retreat when his death was announced to them by a letter received from the Rev. Father Hannon, his Vicar-General. Three communions were offered for the repose of his soul by all the Community.

God bless you, dear Mother, and all your holy Community—recommending myself to your prayers, believe me to remain,

Most truly and gratefully yours,

†WILLIAM, Bishop of Halifax."

In the same year, St. Vincent's Hospital was opened, and placed under the care of Sister Mary Angela Hughes. The Mother-house was so poor, that the Very Rev. Superior, Father Starrs, paid the first year's rent. As we shall have occasion to revert to it later on at some length, we will not enter into further details concerning it here.

On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1849, a second election for Mother was held, at which the Right Rev. Bishop presided.* The same Mother can be re-elected a second time, at present, but at that time the Bishop never intended to allow it to be permitted. The Constitutions then, as well as now, allowed it, and the Archbishop has since withdrawn his objection. Providence willed the change in dear Mother's position, to manifest some of the finest points in her character.

* The Bishop regarded the good Mother Elizabeth as the Foundress of the Community in New York, and offered on this occasion, to confirm her in office for life, but she resolutely declined.

Most willingly did she surrender her charge to Mother Jerome who was elected to succeed her. With the humility of a child, she asked the Bishop what she was to do, and if she was to go back to the orphans. The good Bishop, speaking officially, as protector of the Constitutions, without any respect of persons, said to her: "You will now take the last place in the Community, Mother, and apply yourself to reading the 'Lives of the Saints.'" The order was fulfilled to the letter.

On the 10th of December, the good Mother went to the Prince Street asylum, and on the 13th, received her appointment as private sister, at the Half-orphan asylum in Eleventh Street, New York. She cheerfully resumed the duties of a private sister, after thirty-five years of continued superiorship.

In 1851, the St. Patrick's Male orphan asylum was opened, and Mother Elizabeth was appointed its superior. It is a very large building, and the organizing of that house must have been a great labor. But it was a labor of love to her, since it was so intimately connected with her dear orphans. Soon, very soon, the beds of those long dormitories were arranged, the class-rooms furnished, and the boys settled to that regular routine of daily duties, which fits the young to

enter on a course of persevering exertion in after-life. The good Mother often visited the Mother-house, and whenever she did so, she edified all who saw her. On one occasion, a young novice, who had heard of Mother Elizabeth for many years, and had been very anxious to see her, on being introduced to her, knelt down to get her blessing, not doubting but that one so holy and venerable, would freely give her blessing to so young and humble a person. The good mother, who seemed troubled at this spontaneous homage to her virtue and high reputation in the Community, rose hastily, and did not speak until the novice had risen from her knees. She remained standing while she spoke to this young religious, holding her hand affectionately in her own. The sisters afterwards assured the novice, she could not have done anything more discordant to the Mother's deep sense of humility.

During the ten years that Mother Elizabeth presided over the new asylum, she trained many young sisters to a zealous devotedness to the orphan children. Her example in itself was all-potent in a house where all was union and cordiality of feeling.

Never, for a moment, was this good mother unemployed. Every sister with whom I have

spoken has told me this. If she was called to the parlor, she always took some sewing for the orphans with her. Even when conducting persons through the institution, she would at each possible chance take a few stiches. Her untiring industry had been remarked in the early days of her religious life. When she first came to New York, a Mr. Cornelius Heany, an eccentric but very benevolent gentleman, who was at that time manager of the asylum, used frequently to say to her, on seeing her come with her work in hand: "Well, here you are, Sister Elizabeth, with your work, but who knows how much you really do? The Master will come with his rod and soap one of these days to see!" "True enough, Mr. Heany," was her usual reply, "who can, indeed, say how much I do?" This gentleman was one of her best friends, inasmuch as he was one of the best friends of the orphans in Prince Street asylum, which was always his favorite institution. A little anecdote, relating to this gentleman, is worth recording. A poor man had been serving the asylum with milk for nearly twenty years, when Mr. Heany formed a very strong desire to have one of his own tenants serve in his place. It was proposed to the managers, but they were unwilling to change without some good reason.

It had been talked about privately among themselves several times. Finally, it was urged again by Mr. Heany, at a meeting of the managers at the asylum. Several were quite violent in their opposition to dismissing the old milkman, and, as sometimes happens with the greatest minds, a trifling matter was causing much unnecessary debate. Mother Elizabeth was seated in the back reception room as usual, so that, should the managers desire to speak with her, no time need be lost waiting for her. One of the managers desired her to give her opinion. "Well, gentlemen," said she, in her usual calm manner, "I have been surprised to see you spending your time talking on a subject that should be settled at once. It makes very little difference who serves the asylum with milk." The good gentlemen, of whose number, probably scarce one now remains, were too noble hearted not to appreciate the just view Sister Elizabeth took of the affair, and the old milkman was allowed to continue his rounds.

CHAPTER XIX.

Gentleness of Mother Elizabeth—Her Methods of Punishment—She Repairs the Orphans' Clothing—She Inculcates Love for Truth.

THE orphans were so sensible of Mother's affectionate care for them, that they left no means untried to give her pleasure. They would compose pieces for her feast day, sometimes in prose, sometimes in poetry, which were, at least, creditable for sentiment, if not for literary merit. Mother was strongly averse to using any severe measures with the children. As the sisters knew her influence with them, it was a general punishment to send the idle and wayward to Mother's room. Sometimes, the good mother would have a dozen culprits seated with her, studying away. She generally heard their lessons herself, or if she was very much engaged, she would desire a sister to hear them in her presence. They would study to please her, but she would never use any coercive measures with them. Indeed, it was well known to the sisters that the children liked to be sent to her. After reciting their punish lessons, they were sure to get some candy, fruit or nuts, with which Mother's friends kept her well supplied.

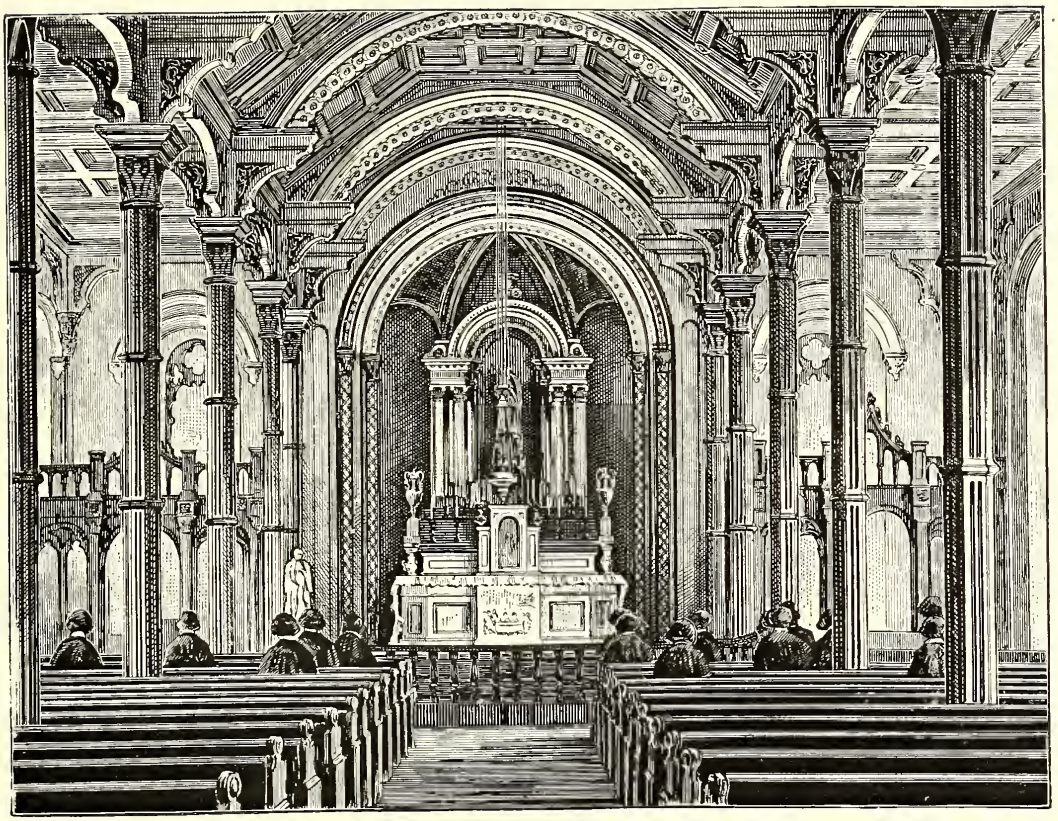
She always won a mother's place in their affections on the first day of their coming to her. Many of the little ones came to the asylum, before their tears had ceased to flow for a dear mother and father. Every little new comer was always taken to Mother at once. She would hear the little one's sorrowful tale, and mingle her tears with his own. After he had discharged his little load of grief into her heart, she would say, "Now, dear little sonny, do not cry any more. God has taken your dear mother or [father] to Heaven, but He has given you to me now, and I will be your dear mother." This was always said so tenderly and affectionately, that the little fellow would look up to her, and really believe she was his own mother, and this feeling always continued. With the clear perceptions of childhood, those dear children saw that she had all the feelings of a mother's heart for them. This generated a noble feeling in them. The little lads felt as if they were basking in the sunshine of a mother's smile while near her, and the genial influence of filial affection drew out and strengthened the finest qualities in their natures. A few instances of the manner in which she used to deal with them, will, I am sure, prove interesting to all. A little boy was taken to her room one day, just after a sister from the

Mother-house had entered. The evidence of his guilt was about him, for he had his apron-ful of tomatoes, which he had stolen from the garden. "Why, you naughty little boy," said Mother to him, "why did you get those without permission? Had you come to me, you know very well, I would have given you some. Now, tell Mother what you intended to do with so many? Surely, you could not eat half of them. "Mother," said the little fellow, "I was going to eat part of them myself, and I was going to give some of them to such a fellow, and some to such a fellow." "Well," said Mother, "go sit down there, and eat just as many as you wish yourself, and then come to me." The little lad not at all abashed went, and did as he had been told. At last, he came and told mother he had eaten as many as he wanted. "Very well," said Mother, "go now and divide the rest as you intended, but remember, you must never pick any more without leave." I believe, there was little reason to fear that he ever would.

In a house where there were over four hundred children, it was, of course, absolutely necessary to enforce pretty determined regulations about taking care of clothing. The sister in charge of the clothes at that time, was one, who could assume a very severe expression,

which alarmed more than the severest threats from another. During the Christmas holidays, a little boy had been frolicking around in recreation time, and had torn his clothes very sorely. In disgrace, he was taken to Mother's room. The good Mother had visitors, but no circumstances could render her unmindful of the orphans. After a few words of reprimand she took out a new suit of clothes, and sent him to put them on, telling him to bring back the torn suit. He returned in a few moments, and was sent to sit in the corner. Although the cast-off garments were very much soiled, and it was the latter part of the week, she turned them seam by seam, and mended them nicely. All this she did, to spare him from having to undergo further condign punishment. All know that children have a correct judgment about the treatment they receive, and, if truthful, are rarely at fault in their testimonies; now, surely, that little boy received a moving lesson on this occasion. Think you, he would have wished to give Mother all that trouble again?

Sometimes, one or two of the lads would take it into their heads to run away; frequently they would come back of their own accord, at other times, they would be brought back. They would be taken to Mother immediately after their



CHAPEL OF THE FIRST MOUNT ST. VINCENT.

The Catholic
Theological Union
LIBRARY
Chicago, Ill.

return. She would reprove them in her usual firm, yet gentle manner, and would then question them, as to where they had been. She would generally find from them that they had been with some of the orphans who had been bound out for some time. There was a strong feeling of mutual affection among the boys, for Mother Elizabeth left no means untried to make them regard one another as brothers. The little fellows used frequently to amuse her with building castles in the air, telling her when they got rich they would take an orphan, and bring him up. Often these little truants had had no better bed than a wagon. She always searched their pockets before dismissing them, taking from them tobacco and such things. She would never put them in hazard of telling a lie. She had a market woman in her employ, and sometimes found it necessary to send a boy for her. On his return to the house, she would desire he should be sent to her, and as sure as he had stolen anything, his looks on coming to her would betray him. She would give the suspected one a cap to try on or a vest, and after a little would say "Well how many turnips did you take from that poor woman's basket to-day? two or three?" "I didn't take turnips," the surprised boy would reply, "but apples." "Tell me how many you took?"

She would, of course, give him a day's punishment for it, and perhaps several day's. It was remarked by the sisters, that the children always seemed so light-hearted after they had told their faults to Mother.

It may, perhaps, be inferred from these details, that there might have been plots among the boys to get to Mother's room. The sisters used to overhear them speaking of Mother, and their expressions were always those of true filial affection. This was the drift of the conversation once: "Ain't Mother industrious? She is always mending coats for the fellows. She doesn't sew for the sisters, nor for priests. Don't she love us dearly? When *she* dies, we won't have any other mother, but she'll go to heaven, straight off. There's no Purgatory for her!" It is, moreover, true that the sisters had to keep a kind of watch over the children, to prevent them going too frequently to Mother's room, because they knew she would never send them away. Once, she was very sick, and a little baby boy had sense enough to know, that no one would see him stealing up to her room while the Community was at reading. He went up and tapped softly at her door. Mother stopped the sister that was reading for her, saying: "There is some

one at the door." "It is one of the children, I know, Mother," said the sister, going on with the reading. "Ah! see what he wants," said Mother. The sister did so, and on hearing he had come up to see Mother sent him away, and on returning told Mother. "Oh! let him in, he will not be able to come up again," said Mother. The little lad was brought back, and walking across the room whispered to Mother that he wanted an *Agnus Dei*. Mother sent for her case, got a ribbon for it, and gave it to the little one, who went off quite pleased with his adventure.

The good Mother, as I have already said, treated those dear children with respect in life and in death. She was never known to descend to what is vulgarly called nicknaming, although many of her sisters had given certain pet names to the children, by which they were known throughout the house. No one, who saw Mother in her intercourse with those little ones, could doubt but that she saw Jesus Christ in them. She never spoke idly. Yet once, she mentioned to several sisters, that as she was standing one evening at sunset on the front porch of the asylum, she had seemed to see, a beautiful lady holding a little child in her arms just above the horizon. But rising gradually

she approached near the zenith, and then, descending, seemed to commit the child to her care. After an interval of two years she saw the same thing again. I hazard no opinion on the subject, but content myself with adding that she assured Sister Magdalen, that she was by no means asleep at the time. However, I do not hesitate to affirm, that had the Blessed Mother of God presented each one of the orphans in turn to her, the good Mother could not have done more for her youthful charge, in acknowledgement of the confidence reposed in her, than she did do.

CHAPTER XX.

Illness of Mother Elizabeth—She is anointed—She Recovers—She Works During her Illness—Her Letters to Master Conboy.

AFTER a long life of almost uninterrupted good health, Mother was attacked, in her sixty-seventh year, with a spasmodic affection, brought on, probably, from over-exerting herself on the vigil of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in 1857. She always took the entire charge of the large chapel at the asylum. On the occasion alluded to, her zeal for Mary's honor led her, notwithstanding that it was a fast day and very warm weather, "to desire to give" it a very thorough cleaning. She called a poor, uneducated girl, employed in the asylum, to assist her. She soon saw that this girl was in an obstinate humor, and not being able to find out whether she were sick or not, she sent her off to her sewing. Mother moved the heavy benches, and, unknown to any of the sisters, cleaned and arranged everything. In the afternoon, Sister Veronica, the infirmarian, was alarmed at seeing bright purple spots on her face, and on learning what she had been doing, was still more uneasy. She persuaded her to take some remedies. On

the feast, the good Mother seemed to the sisters to be better. She was at Mass and at Holy Communion, and in the evening joined in the recreation. The infirmarian, however, was not so easily deceived, but asked her again and again if she were well. The good Mother told her, that she was too anxious about her, yet, she confessed to a sensation of extreme exhaustion over her. Her first duty in the morning was to trim the sanctuary lamp, and she was always the first in the chapel. On the morning of the 16th of August, she was missed from her accustomed place. It was an unheard of thing for her to be absent, as she literally complied with St. Vincent's precept to superiors, to be the first at all those exercises that cost most to nature. As the hour for Mass approached, the good Sister Calista hastened up to see if she were well. She found her lying in a state of insensibility. The alarm was given, and the sisters flocked round her bedside. The priest came, and anointed her, for several physicians, who had been called, judged it expedient. How many prayers were offered for her that day, before she gave signs of a *returning* life, as it seemed, to those who had seen her in the morning! Rev. Fathers McQuaid and Madden were there to see their dying Mother, as they thought. Sisters from all

the different houses were there, and anguish was pictured on every face. Truly, did it seem like a resurrection, when she showed signs of returning consciousness. From that time, she was subject to these attacks with scarcely a premonitory symptom. On recovering from them her first words would always be: "Merciful God, have mercy on me." Whenever she saw Sister Veronica, she would say: "Dear Sister, how are the little children?" The little ones were always the special objects of her care.

She would never use a chair in the chapel; her place was always on the bench with the smallest children, in the humblest part of the chapel. During her illness, her attacks were frequent and severe, and it was generally thought each one would be her last. On one occasion, word was sent to Mother Angela, who had succeeded Mother Jerome in the government of the Community, that she had been anointed. As it was late in the evening, Mother Angela was obliged to delay visiting her until the next day. The next morning, she hastened down to the asylum, and what was her surprise, when she found the good Mother sitting up in her bed sewing for the orphans. Her weak state required rest, but she feared nothing so much, as eating the bread of the orphans in idleness. One of

the sisters had entreated her to lay aside her work. "Ah, no, dear sister," said she, "I am afraid, I shall go to our Lord, empty-handed." Therefore, she gave herself no reprieve, but would at once resume her work, as soon as she could sufficiently steady her hand to use a needle. Even when lying in a state of insensibility, her hands would move as if she were sewing.

During the last years of her life, she had two orphan boys at college in Montreal, who seemed to her to have vocations to the priesthood. She kept up a constant correspondence with them, and in her letters, spoke most affectionately. Indeed, her letters were filled with tender advice, given with a mother's insinuating grace. She evinced much attention to their minutest wants. To defray the expenses of these young men, she sold, with permission, the silver ware which the Archbishop had presented to the asylum, after substituting plated articles. A few extracts from her letters will show her fellings towards her boys. In one, dated September 18, 1859, she says: "Your welcome letter reached me yesterday. I gladly spend the present moment in saying a few words to you in return. You may be assured, I was well pleased to hear, by our good Father Madden,

that you are blest with good health, and are using your time well. I trust we shall always have the consolation to hear, that you know how to value the opportunities by which you are surrounded, and the blessings given you in preference to so many others, who are left to labor hard for their daily bread, exposed to so many dangers and difficulties. Do not forget, my dear child, to reflect sometimes on these things, and to return thanks to the most High, for your good fortune in being in a home of perfect safety.

"You would do well to be particular respecting your clothing, and use as much economy as you can; at the same time, I wish you to remember that I desire you to be comfortable, and have everything you need.

"Remember me kindly to master Conboy,* and do not forget me before the throne of Mercy. May the Most High, bless and protect you, is the earnest prayer of your affectionate "SISTER ELIZABETH."

In the same letter, she mentioned that the number of orphans in the asylum was four hundred and three, and that the managers on the previous Sunday had agreed to increase the

* Another orphan boy at the same College.

number to four hundred and fifty. "Now," said she, "if I were about thirty or forty years younger, I might feel able to do my little part among them."

"A few weeks ago, our dear Sister Domitila went to remain at our new Mother-house, Mount St. Vincent. It is really a very beautiful place."

Alluding to some privilege granted to him and to Master Conboy, she says: "Your fidelity to rule and order will be the best return you can make for such favors."

In another of her letters she says: "As usual, my many duties would not allow me to answer your welcome letter before this. We have been constantly engaged for some weeks, trying to prepare our poor fellows for their examination, which took place on last Friday. Very many of the *great folks* were present, among others His Grace, the Archbishop, a great number of clergy, Mayor Wood, the Honorable John Kelly. and a multitude of our most distinguished citizens. Much pleasure was expressed, and *all* appeared highly gratified. As far as my poor judgment goes, I think the boys did very well indeed."

After her feast day, in reply to a letter from one of these students, she says: "Many thanks for your kind and good wishes. Do not fail to

continue to pray earnestly for me. I imagine my days may not be many more in this land of sorrows."*

In two letters written in the March and April before her death, and which were the last she addressed to an orphan, who was still pursuing his studies in Montreal, she says: "And now, my dear child, I entreat you to pray fervently, and reflect well, upon what state of life you really think our divine Lord wishes you to embrace. Do not attempt to study for the Church, unless you really think the Most High calls you to that state, and be sure to take the advice of a wise and prudent director. As far as my poor judgment goes, there is nothing on this earth, worse than a bad priest. I also believe that a good priest is a true blessing." The answer to this letter made her hope the young man in question was really called to the priesthood.

The following letter was written a short time before her death: "Dear child, your welcome letter reached me in due time, and its contents afforded me much consolation. I trust you will prove, with the blessing of the Most High, to be everything that is good, if you are really in your proper place. Be faithful in using your

* November 20, 1860.

time well. Often reflect deeply on what great sanctity ought to adorn every action, and, I might say, every moment of the life of a person, who is called to the sacred ministry. I therefore entreat you to pray fervently, and reflect deeply on the solid virtues which it is your duty to spare no pains to acquire. Be convinced my dear child, that unless a minister of the Gospel be rich, as it were, in every virtue, he cannot fulfil the duties of his high and holy calling, as it will not be in his power to impart to others what he does not possess.

"I am living in hopes that I will be spared to see you return. Let me know the amount of your bill in the next, as I wish to be prepared to meet it. Times here are very hard in consequence of the disunion between the North and the South. Our divine Lord and Master alone knows, how all these troubles will end. . . . The children are busy preparing for examination. Do not forget me before the sacred altar —may the most High bless, protect, and direct you!"

CHAPTER XXI.

Self-Possession of Mother Elizabeth in Time of Danger—She Prepares the Meal for the Hungry Orphans—She Removes the Snow from the Roofless Rooms—Instruction of Father Hecker—Sister Magdalen Loses her Sight—Mother Elizebeth's Advice to a Novice.

In February, 1861, on a wild tempestuous morning, the entire roof was lifted from the asylum, and deposited in the back yard. When the accident occurred the noise was terrifying; bricks were falling in every direction from the upper part of the shattered walls. A few of the children screamed, but Mother quieted them by merely saying in a reproachful tone: "Is it possible?" With a firm, determined appearance, she stationed herself near the front door, and in uncertainty whether the whole house might not be overturned, she assembled all the children, from different class rooms by sounding a little bell. Having seen that every child had a change of clothing with him, she, with truly admirable presence of mind, ordered them out the front way over to the basement of the church. Four hundred and fifty boys were thus dismissed, and not one was injured in the slightest degree. The good Dr. Thébaud, on hearing the first

rumor of the catastrophe, hastened to the asylum, and supposing there was any number of broken limbs from the appearance of things, could hardly believe that no one was injured. Several boys, under the influence of fright, ran without heeding whither, but some of the sisters brought them back. As the sisters were without shawls or bonnets, a poor man, seeing one of them at some distance from the asylum, exposed to the inclemency of the weather, took off his overcoat, and begged her to throw it around her. When all the children had passed through the falling bricks and timbers, Mother Elizabeth visited every apartment in the asylum, to see that the fires were extinguished. Then she went over to the basement to see the children. Thinking they must be hungry, she took two or three sisters with her, and going back to the asylum, she prepared a quantity of bread and butter for them. These precautions and duties, were all attended to, at a time, when it was feared the walls of the asylum might fall at any moment. A gentleman near by, who attempted to close the sky light of his house was instantly killed by a falling brick.

The wind having subsided a little in the afternoon, the good Mother thought it best to have all the beds brought down from the

unroofed dormitories, and made up in the class and reception rooms. This having been done, the children returned to the house, and retired at the usual time. Later in the evening, a few of the sisters assembled in one of the small rooms on the second floor, which served as an improvised community room. They were all too much excited to think of getting sewing, and no one noticed at the time as anything extraordinary, that Mother Elizabeth was as busy as ever over a little orphan boy's coat. She bore her usual serene expression of countenance, the same color, the same cheerful mind.

For several weeks, every inconvenience was experienced by the sisters and children. The weather was intensely cold, the workmen were very slow in putting on the roof; besides, they wished to guard against any like accident. During the time, several snow storms occurred. Mother Elizabeth aided in removing the snow from the floors of the uncovered apartments, notwithstanding the urgent remonstrances of her sisters. The very morning after the accident, her niece called upon her. Mother Elizabeth could not be found for a long time, for she was busied removing the snow and water from the top floor. Several extremely kind offers were made to the sisters at this time. The ladies of St.

Luke's hospital offered an unoccupied wing of their building for the accommodation of the orphans. Mr. Keyser, a non-catholic, kindly proffered several unoccupied houses. When the asylum was first projected, this gentleman's family had been bitterly opposed to having it in their vicinity. A little incident that occurred soon after the asylum was opened came near exciting their ill feeling still more. One of the grown up sons was passing around the street bordering on the boy's playground, when through pure mischief the boys pelted stones at him, unobserved by the sisters. He called at the asylum to enter his complaint, and Mother Elizabeth showed much concern on hearing of the orphans' misconduct. However, she reminded him, that such sport was natural to boys when they could escape notice, but assured him, he should not be annoyed again. The young man, who had been quite as much irritated at the sisters as at the children, was perfectly mollified by Mother Elizabeth's kind, gentle manner, and his whole family have given proofs of kind feeling on many occasions since.

A few Sundays after the accident, Rev. Father Hecker gave the boys an instruction at Vespers. He began in so peculiar a manner that they were all attention: "Boys," said he,

"there has a very bad boy got in among you, very bad indeed. He is going about whispering evil things to you all the time, trying to get you angry, to tell stories, or to swear; I do not know all the evil he tries to do you. The sisters do not know either; not even Mother Elizabeth. [Here Mother was seen to look round anxiously]. He does an endless deal of mischief; he even took off the roof of your house not long ago, and of my church, also! He is called 'the *old* boy,' and indeed he is very old, for he has been known from the beginning of the world."

In the last year of Mother's life, a great trial befell her. Sister Magdalen, the oldest sister in the Community after herself, and who had been with her for many long years, was closing the slats of the blinds, just after the notice of "fire" had been given by the men who were blasting the rocks, while the grounds were being graded. A small stone breaking through the glass at that instant entered poor sister's right eye, and entirely deprived it of sight. To see this dear sister suffering must have caused Mother many a sharp pang, but she murmured not, because, it had been permitted, she knew, by the "Great Master," and this thought was enough to calm

all disquietude in her heart. The poor workmen were so distressed about the accident that to show their concern, they made up among themselves, a purse of one hundred dollars and presented it to the asylum.

Whenever any one of the sisters expressed too much anxiety, or even a desire to know if different things would turn out as she wished, Mother would invariably say something in reply, that would indicate that her mind was directed to but one point, and desired only the accomplishment of the holy will of God. Her favorite expressions on these occasions were: "Time will tell. Let us leave it to the Great Master, He knows what is best."

She was never hurried, never impulsive, yet she accomplished much by her unremitting application to duty. One of the sisters remarked of her: "Her words were few, but her good works many."

The following instruction which Mother gave to a young novice, was no doubt the fruit of her own experience. "My dear child, said she, "do you love little children?" "Yes, mother," replied the sister, "and I hope to love the orphans very much." "Yes, take my advice. Love our Lord's little ones; treat them with a tender heart and tender feeling, and our

Lord will treat you with the same. If you have a hard heart and rough feelings for them, our Lord will treat you roughly, too." Oh! what consolations and interior delights must this good Mother have experienced! Forming our judgment from these words, and our knowledge of her conduct towards those dear children, we may safely say that she was the beloved of God.

On rallying after any severe attack, she would turn to the sister sitting by her bed, and say: "I thank our Lord, I can still work for His little ones!"

The hired help in the asylum shared her maternal care. Once, one of the girls had a severe cold. Mother took her privately to her room, bathed her feet, and wrapped her up warmly to prevent her becoming more seriously ill. A grown up orphan girl, who was employed in the asylum, gave Mother some pain one day by her conduct. The child said she did not think much about it until after she had retired, when she became so troubled, she could not sleep. So tortured was she, that, she finally arose, and stole into Mother's room. She found Mother writing at her desk. Bursting into tears, she threw herself on her knees, and begged her pardon. Kindly embracing the poor penitent, Mother

said to her: "God bless you, child, now go to your rest." Mother's kindness had such an effect on her, that she says, she wept all night; "but," she adds, "I never gave her pain after that."

Her respect for religious was very great. Two sisters of Providence boarded at the asylum for a year, in order to have easy access to the deaf and dumb asylum, as they were about to open such an institution in Montreal. They were desirous, therefore, of learning the sign language. The good Mother, to have part in so noble a work, gave them her own room, and always waited upon them herself. One of these good sisters was at Mount St. Vincent, when Mother died, and mingled her tears with those of the sisters, as if she had been one of her spiritual daughters.

Mother was most exact about her accounts. She would charge the Mother-house for every spool of thread or skein of silk that was not used for the orphans. After her first attacks, she was afraid to trust her own accounts, and called on one of the sisters to overlook them; but there were never any errors in them. She arranged her accounts every evening, knowing how treacherous the memory is in matters in which numbers are concerned. Sister Domitilla frequently

went out shopping with Mother. Once Sister told me, they had been down two or three stories under ground in the city stores, in order to save a little for the orphans, and this, too, at a time when poor Mother was hardly able to leave the house.

She was rarely absent from the community room during recreation. Here she was always cheerful, yet she was never known to laugh so as to be heard. Her bright smiles and happy manner evidenced how much pleasure it gave her to see the sisters enjoying themselves. The fear of God is called by holy writers the guardian of sanctity; it was, no doubt, so in the case of Mother Elizabeth. Even in recreation, she was as circumspect as during the hours of recollection. If any one of the sisters was wanting in humility or charity, Mother would give her a look over her spectacles, for her head was always slightly inclined over her sewing. This was, as all knew, the severest public mark of disapprobation ever given at such times.

A sister tells me, she was sent to the asylum, years ago, while she was yet a novice, quick-tempered, and possessed of but few ideas of a religious life. Mother discerned her character at once, and determined to win her by kindness.

During her first night, in the convent, what was the novice's surprise to see Mother remove the screen she had around her own bed, and bring it to hers, placing it between her bed and the window. The young sister in vain entreated her, not to deprive herself of it, for one who was so very strong and healthy. Mother replied: "well, my dear child, it is worth while to preserve you so; you can be of great service in the Community, but as for me, I am only an old good-for-nothing sister now." This same sister says of herself, that she was sometimes too forward in recreation, considering that so many old sisters were present. One of her sisters remarked this fault to her, she says, but not as kindly as suited her pride. Displeased, she complained bitterly to Mother, saying: "Mother, as you were there, and did not reprove me, I think no one else should have done so!" "Dear child," said Mother, "I did notice that you talked a little too much, and laughed a little too loud, and the next time you do so, I will give you a little sign." This she always did afterwards. This sister says, she was sometimes wanting in exterior respect towards Mother, and that on becoming sensible of her fault, she would go to ask her pardon. Mother would always say: "O! my dear, I fear my want of patience excited you;" although it is

well known that she never spoke impatiently or sharply.

It was a favorite saying of hers that: "A kind word hurts nobody." It matters not how aggravating circumstances might be, she was never heard to speak harshly, excepting once, when according to her own testimony, she did so. A person about the house, had given Mother a great deal of trouble one morning, and yet, in the afternoon, came and asked a favor of her. Mother arose and performed the service required at once, and in the kindest manner, at which one of the sisters remonstrated thinking her too lenient. "No, dear sister," said she, "let us return kindness for unkindness. I have never spoken unkindly, since a gentlemen called at the Prince Street asylum, after I went there, and asked me if he could see the Rev. Mr. ———, giving the name of one of the clergymen attached to the cathedral at that time. That priest does not live here! said I, with some severity of tone. The gentleman seeming to perceive my displeasure arose, and said in the politest and most gentlemanly manner: 'Good morning, Sister Elizabeth!' I think God permitted me to commit that fault, in order to let this good gentleman teach me a lesson, and I have never forgotten it."

Her spirit of poverty extended to everything. A little shawl, which she had brought from Emmittsburg was the only one she ever had. It was only because it could not be found, that she consented that sister should set about making her one, the very day before her death, and she had no small struggle with herself before she consented. Her clothes were always old, but very neat. At the time of her death, she had no habit sufficiently good for her decent burial, so she was buried in that of one of the sisters'.

In her food, she showed both a spirit of poverty and of mortification. Once during the annual retreat, while she was Mother, an inexperienced sister was in the place of the one who superintended the baking. The young sister, through her lack of knowledge, gave the sisters sour bread nearly all the time. As soon as the retreat was over she hastened to Mother with tears in her eyes, to beg a penance. "My dear child," said Mother, hardly seeming to remember that the bread had been bad, "it was only too good." This same sister on another occasion broke two large earthen milk dishes. As she knew very well that careless handling rendered such accidents a breach of holy poverty, she felt her fault very much. Mother believed it unnecessary to afflict her any more, or to give

her a penance ; she wished rather to console her, and to raise her spirits, as it was in recreation. As the trait that mother told on this occasion was the most amusing incident I think that she ever repeated, I will give it here. "Sit down, my dear child," said the good mother, motioning to her to rise from her knees, "I must tell you a story. There was once a Methodist minister's wife, who used to preach sometimes from her husband's pulpit. On one occasion, she was exhorting on the subject of patience, and to illustrate it by an example worthy of imitation, she told the congregation, that although her milkmaid broke all her milk dishes the other day, yet she neither scolded her, nor got angry with her!"

Mother never evinced any desire to know the news of the day. Indeed, her mind was too well regulated, she was too mortified to show curiosity in her words, looks, or actions. If I could but give a perfect portraiture of her religious appearance! Her quiet, subdued, gentle manner, her cheerful, yet recollected expression of countenance, her respectful bearing towards her dear sisters, and towards all religious in general, and her demeanor in the chapel were such, as to lead one to suppose, she was abyssed in a sense of her own nothingness in the

presence of the great God of Majesty. Her manner of saying prayers was very devout. She always said a certain number of prayers of Rule before dinner, read a portion of the Gospel, and recited the *Angelus* (or *Regina Cœli*, according to the season). I was there once, and only once, and never will I forget the pious, recollected appearance of those four hundred and fifty children, each one kneeling with his eyes closed and hands clasped. Mother was kneeling in the midst of this little group. She pronounced the prayers with much becoming, heartfelt, impressive piety. A sister tells me her felling, devout manner of making the usual three o'clock adoration ot Jesus Crucified, was enongh to melt the hardest heart.

She showed great address in the art ot calming souls. Once, immediately after she was made Mother, one sister who had had recourse to several enlightened, spiritual persons, without experiencing relief under certain interior trials, laid her trouble before her. She received a few words of advice admirably suited to the disturbed state of her interior, and was referred to a certain chapter and book of the " Following of Christ." She was surprised to see how perfectly conversant

Mother was with that excellent book, and on reading the part designated, her soul was restored to a state of perfect quiet.

During her entire life Mother seemed, like St. Jerome, to hear the dread trumpet of the angel proclaiming the words: "Arise ye dead and come to judgment." Often, did she express her fear of going empty handed before her Judge: indeed, her whole demeanor spoke the effects of this chastening fear of God. Before coming to any important decision, it was her custom to consult God in prayer, to deliberate and take counsel; but, her judgment once formed, she remained firm as a rock, regarding as a temptation any suggestion to depart from her decision. In this she imitated our holy Founder, who used to aver that God will not call us to account for matters concerning which we can say to Him: "Lord, I have recommended this affair to You, and I have taken counsel, which is all I could do to know Your holy will."

Mother's personal appearance indicated that elevation of character, which storm and trial cannot deject, but which rather incite to press on with more courage to the prize of her supernal vocation in Christ Jesus.

On the fiftieth anniversary of her entrance into religion, the freshness of her clear complex-

ion shone on an unwrinkled brow, and the subdued sparkle of her dark eyes betrayed, even then, the unquenchable, yet hallowed vigor of her soul. "Her sweet tones," to use the words of Bishop Bayley, of Newark, "seemed from the voice of an angel; indeed, her whole exterior showed her to be in every respect a woman of superior mould, nature in every movement subject to grace." It is true to say, that she was a model of every virtue. She considered herself not only the interpreter of the rule, but its guardian, and never deviating without strict necessity from the slightest point, she could, and did exact perfect observance from others, yet all this in her own mild, inflexible manner. The slightest indication of the will of her superiors was a positive law to our Mother. One morning a sister was sent to the asylum to teach in the parish school. Mother had not seen this sister for some time, and expressed great pleasure at her coming, saying: "As sister has gone to school this morning you, dear child, can stay with me to-day." Mother then broke the seal of a note from the Mother Superior, which read: "I send you Sister ———, who is prepared to enter on her school duties at once." "My dear child, you will have to go to the school at once, Mother seems to wish it." "I do not think Mother would care at all," said the

disappointed sister. No matter dear, it is obedience, you know." So well did this saintly Mother know, that although the thing commanded be small, the fault of disobeying may be great.

Her heaviest trial was to send away a poor person unassisted. It often happened that she had nothing to give but what belonged to the orphans. On such occasions, rather than give nothing, she would bestow part of her next meal, and go without it herself. A sister, who knew of this pious expedient, was so touched with the appearance of a poor man, that she begged Mother's permission to give him her next meal. Mother said she might do so, and the sister adds that when the next meal time came, her hunger was like a temptation. However, Mother and some of the other sisters gave her a contribution from their share, and she fared pretty well.

Mother always took her turn in staying from Mass on week days to take charge of the children, when Mass was not offered in the house.

On other days, neither snow nor rain kept her from Mass, although it was quite a little walk to the church.

CHAPTER XXII.

Renewed Illness of Mother Elizabeth—She Amuses the Sisters during Recreation—Her Death—Grief of the Sisters and Orphans.

THE Commencements at the asylum had, for several years before Mother's death, attracted great attention, and a crowd of educated and refined people were always present. His Grace, the Archbishop of New York, seemed delighted to mark the increased signs of improvement each year. The exercises, such as recitations, examples worked on the blackboard, declamations, instrumental and vocal music, were very creditable. It was usual to have a military display on these occasions, and the little lads had the neatest uniforms in the country. Of course, it was a very laborious task to prepare for these exhibitions. Mother Elizabeth always heard the boys rehearse several times. In June, 1861, the day fixed for the exhibition, proved very unfavorable, but as the Archbishop and quite a number of persons were in attendance, the exercises were performed. As a large number of persons had been anticipating the pleasure of being present, the disappointment was very great, and a number of gentlemen urged a second performance. Mother

Elizabeth, who felt herself quite exhausted, hesitated for a long time, but finally consented.

The 21st of June, which was the eve of her death, had been looked forward to by all the sisters with pleasure, as it was the feast day of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, the patron of the presiding mother. Mother Elizabeth arose at the usual early hour. As she was passing through the front hall, to enter the chapel, she met the portress leading two little boys who had just been brought back to the asylum. The sister says, that Mother took their hands and smiled brightly upon them, as if she were truly delighted to see them. She motioned to them to precede her to the chapel, and had them kneel or sit by her during the morning exercises, prayers, meditation, and Mass. The good Mother offered her Holy Communion for her dear Mother Superior in Jesus Christ, and in the course of the forenoon heard the little boys rehearse their pieces, and say some lessons.

As it was the usual day for Confession, she prepared, and made it in the afternoon. Before evening, an orphan girl who was at service, brought her three roses on a branch. She gratefully took them from her, saying: "What a beautiful image of the Blessed Trinity; three

adorable Persons in one God. See what a lesson these flowers teach us!"

In the evening Mother brought out a letter, she had just received from an orphan in California, and read it to please the sisters. The poor fellow who wrote it was only half-witted; he had been in the asylum for years, before he was put out to service. After his departure, it was soon found that he could not shift for himself, and so he came back to Mother. She was pained to see the poor fellow in a sadly neglected state. His head was covered with sores, filled with corruption, and his clothes were soiled and worn. Mother was so much moved, that she took her own wash basin and towel, cleansed his sores, and then procured him a suit of clean garments. The boy had sufficient sense to fully appreciate this kindness, and to her dying day, poor Johnny was always trying to do something for her. After she had employed him around the house awhile, she permitted him to try his fortune in the world. He did much better, and as fast as he received his wages, he carried them to Mother, who always laid them out in procuring clothes for him, though it was much against his will that she did this. He used to protest, she ought to spend the money for herself: "For many is the dollar you have spent

for me," he would say to her. After some years, he went to California, where, by hard work, he amassed the sum of three hundred dollars. In the letter alluded to, he told Mother, he had been to church that morning where he had prayed, that she might live a hundred years, and, as he had been thinking a journey to California might benefit her health, he had earned three hundred dollars to pay her expenses out there, and that she could enter the same Community in that state. Mother was so much amused and gratified, that the tears flowed down her cheeks.

After night prayers that same evening, she visited the different parts of the house to see that everything was in proper order. The sister, who was attending her, heard her say distinctly, as she passed the unfinished platform which the poor carpenter, who gave his gratuitous labors to the asylum, was putting up for the second distribution: "That man lives for God!" She was no doubt thinking of his patient toil.

She always made a preparation for death before retiring, spending ten minutes in prayer and consideration; for she never felt secure from the approach of death. At a quarter past nine she retired. One of the sisters went to her about ten, to know if she wished

anything: "No, good night, dear child, God bless you," said the good Mother. A little before eleven, she was taken suddenly ill. The experienced eye of the first sister who saw her, discerned that her situation was critical in the extreme. The sisters hastened from different parts of the house to her dying bed-side.

They saw, that she who had been exhorting to fervor and zeal in the duties of their holy vocation, with an eloquence that had affected them to tears during the evening chapter, was now lying in a state of insensibility. She was conscious during the recitation of the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She turned her head from one side to the other, repeating at the same time: "Sister, dear Sister," and just as the clock struck eleven, peacefully expired, a few moments before the priest arrived to administer the last sacraments. "It seemed to me," said one of the sisters, who was by her, "as if our Lord saw that her work was fully accomplished, and came and took her sweetly to Himself!"

It would be a difficult matter to portray the afflicted household left behind. The sisters, notwithstanding their efforts, could not suppress their sobs, and the children suspected the truth. Immediately there was a suppressed wail heard

through all the dormitories. At day break five boys arose, and stole away from the house. In a few minutes the door bell rang, and a policeman entered having the weeping boys in charge. "Sister," said the officer, "these boys tell me their Mother is dead, and that they must leave the asylum now." The aged Sister Arsenius was unable to restrain her feelings. Amidst her tears she said: "Yes, boys, Mother is dead, but the sisters will still take care of you." The astonished policeman desired an explanation, and seemed much touched. Holy Church prays not against a sudden death, but against an unprovided death.*

---

* Some time after, alluding to the suddenness of the good Mother's death, an orphan boy penned the following lines:

Tread softly—bow the head
In reverent silence bow;
No passing bell doth toll,
Yet an immortal soul
Is passing now.

Stranger, however great,
With holy reverence bow,
There's on that dying bed,
One who poor orphans fed,
One, holier than thou.

Beneath that lowly roof
Lo! death doth keep his state·
Enter, no crowds attend,
Enter, no guards defend
Death's palace gate.

That chamber, poor, yet clean,
No smiling courtiers tread,
Sisters, who silent stand,
Lift with a trembling hand
A dying head.

No mingling voices sound,
A gentle wail alone:
A sob suppressed,—again
That sharp, deep gasp, and then
The parting groan.

O change! O wondrous change!
Burst are the prison bars,—
This moment, there so low,
So agonized, and now
Beyond the stars!

O change!—stupendous change!—
There lies her soulless clay;
The sun eternal breaks,—
The new immortal wakes,—
Wakes in eternal day!

CHAPTER XXIII.

Funeral of Mother Elizabeth—She is buried at Mount St. Vincent—Lines of one of the Orphans—Father Madden's Tribute to Her Memory.

THE news of Mother's death cast a dark shadow over the homes of the sisters. At the Mother-house a solemn stillness reigned after the announcement. Many sisters visited the asylum during the day. A gentleman, who had been for years under her care in childhood, hastened to the asylum with her weeping sisters, and though a strong man, he was seen crying over her remains like a child, protesting aloud that he had indeed lost his mother. Several sisters whom she had trained to virtue from their tenderest years were there. Monday, June 23d, was fixed for the day of burial. The Rev. Chaplain said an early mass in the asylum chapel for the repose of her soul. In his remarks to the sorrowing children, he told them, they had, indeed, lost a mother, a most tender guardian of youth. He said, he considered it a singular thing that she should have died on the feast of St. Aloysius, the special patron of youth, and that, no doubt, she had been

thus favored on account of her having been so zealous a trainer of youth in the ways of virtue and learning. He called to mind, too, the fact that over the whole world that day, the vigil of St. John the Baptist, the church repeated the name of St. Elizabeth, and he hoped her client would be on this feast welcomed in the bright heaven above. Rev. Father McQuaid chose the altar at the Prince Street asylum, where he offered Mass for the revered Mother, mingling tears and supplications during the holy sacrifice. A solemn High Mass of Requiem, at which hundreds of her dear orphans and sisters assisted, was offered at the cathedral by the Very Rev. Father Starrs, V. G. His Grace was in the sanctuary. There was no time for a sermon on the occasion, as the procession formed from the cathedral for the cemetery at Mount St. Vincent. As soon as it had arrived at the gate, leading from the avenue to the Mother-house, the solemn tolling of the community bell announced to the sisters at home, that the funeral procession conveying the remains of their departed Mother was approaching. The sisters and the young ladies of the academy, forming two long processions, met the funeral near the gate. The sisters stood in single lines, on either side of the road, as the

procession from the City advanced, headed by the cross bearer, the Rev. chaplain, Fathers Kelly, Madden, McCarthy, and many others, who chanted the solemn burial service. The sisters of the choir joined in the chant. "Immediately following the clergy, the remains of our dear mother* were borne in a hearse. They were followed by a number of weeping friends, the sisters that had accompanied the funeral from the city, and lastly, the home sisters and young ladies of the academy, the latter wearing long white veils." Several orphans were in the cemetery, and there amid the prayers of many clergyman, and amid the tears and prayers of the orphans, sisters and friends, the remains of the holy Mother were lowered to their long resting place. An orphan boy then at school, wrote the following lines:

All lonely and cold in the sepulchre slumbers,
The mother of orphans—the soother of pain,
Too high is the theme for my harp's lowly numbers,
Yet fain would I twine me a wreath for thy name
Which humbly shines forth on the tablet of glory,
Unsullied by passion—untarnished by guile,
The loftiest theme for the bard's raptured story,
The mother of orphans' who met death with a smile.

Thou art gone!—thy pure soul on its voyage hath started;
From its ashes the soul of compassion hath flown,
To join the bright choirs of sisters departed,
Who dwell in the light of a fame like thine own.

---

* Community Records.

Farewell thou bright star of a bright constellation
Of sisters, whose memory ne'er can depart,
Thy fame hath no bounds though humble thy station,
Thy name is enshrined in each poor orphan's heart.*

---

* The following extract is from a letter dated July 25, 1861, which one of the sisters received from a nephew of Mother Elizabeth's, Charles Monmonier, Esq., of California. "I need not say to you how shocked I was to hear of my aunt's death—you can realize my feeling, for our loss is the same. I little thought when I received her last letter,—longer than usual—so cheerful and so cheering,—that even then the hand that wrote it was cold. And yet, sad as I feel that she has gone from us, sadder indeed than I ever felt before at any loss—I still think we ought all rather to rejoice, for God has taken her to Himself when her life was chastened by suffering, and when the measure of her good works was full Few in this world have led more useful and innocent lives, and I cannot but think, the gentle homage paid at her grave by her weeping friends and poor orphan children, was a far nobler mark of respect than the world can offer at the tombs of its greatest potentates. Ever since I left home, one of the most grateful thoughts to me was that of returning and seeing her once more. Aside from our relationship, I felt an affection for her which I never before had for any one. She had, without meaning it, a happy faculty of gaining one's confidence, and of returning for it her good counsel. Little disposed as I have always been to listen to advice, I sought her's and strove to profit by it. But I need not say more to you, for you have always been with her, and felt her influence. Another may come after her, perhaps with more dignity of manner. greater cultivation of mind and knowledge of the world, but never will any of us find again, the tender, gentle creature whom we have lost—one so prudent in counsel, so single minded in purpose, so firm, so just, so affectionate. I cannot find it in my heart to pray for her, for I feel, rather, that she is praying for us that prayer which in one of her letters to me when I was at school, she told me was the best, 'that we may have light to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.' If one dare find reason for the wisdom of the inscrutable, I would say, that the good Lord, whose servant she was, beneficently allowed her to retain to her last days, those faculties she had never abused, but had always employed to the best of her ability, in her Master's service.

The Rev. Father Madden asked the privilege of erecting a marble cross to the memory of her, whom he had ever revered as his mother in Jesus Christ. The inscription on the cross is as follows:

I. H. S.

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF

MOTHER ELIZABETH BOYLE.

Died June 21, 1861.

Aged 71 years.

Erected by the Rev. M. Madden.

"As I read over the little bundle of letters, all she ever wrote to me, dating back for eleven years, to the time I was a schoolboy, onward to that last kind one written four days before she left us, I find no change in the carefully written manuscript, no want of clearness in her compact sentences."

Mr. Monmonier had adopted an orphan boy from the asylum, at Mother's suggestion, I believe. Referring to him in this letter, he says: "And my poor boy Willie, my legacy from her, how his little heart is bursting at his loss. The burden of his last letter [from college] was his joy in soon being able to see dear Mother, and the gratification he would feel in showing her his well-won prizes."

Dr. John F. Monmonier of Baltimore, another nephew of hers, thus alludes to her in a letter dated Baltimore, June 23, 1861: "How great, then, must be the sadness and sorrow of those who have been for a series of years so much nearer her, and so closely connected

with her in her mission of love and charity. How great must be the grief, also, of those poor little orphans, who always looked upon her as a mother; it is their loss but her gain. Her life was one of self-denial and usefulness: it gained not a name for her, but this very disinterestedness will cause her memory to be immovably engraved upon the hearts of the many hundreds, to whom she had devoted her life in her labor of love. And those who admired her virtues while she was living, will now mourn her, not as one dead and consigned to the dark night of the tomb, but will rejoice that she has gone to enjoy the great grace laid up for her, and by imitating her virtues, will yield good fruit, the best monument to her memory."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A Summary of the Virtues of the Good Mother Elizabeth—Her Eminent Spirit of the Interior Life, evinced by her Recollection, and Spirit of Prayer—Her Humility, Simplicity, Charity, and Fidelity to Rule.

WITHOUT the least fear of exaggeration, it may be said, that no one ever saw in Mother Elizabeth anything unbecoming the religious character. She walked always in the presence of her great Master, Whose name was often on her lips, and always in her heart. Sisters who lived in daily intercourse with her for twenty or twenty-five years, assure me they never heard her raise her voice.

She was always calm and perfectly self-possessed, even when every thing was excitement around her.

Her spirit of recollection was most profound, yet there was nothing gloomy or morose about it. Seated by her little table with her work basket, she would spend hours in silence. If a sister from one of the other missions entered her room, she would always rise, and go and meet her with a cordial, affectionate welcome. On one occasion, a young professed sister

visited her—she embraced her very affectionately, saying: "I do not know your name, but you are a Sister of Charity, and that is enough for me." Her kind way and open countenance spoke volumes. Indeed, everything about her, we may say, spoke silently of God. Her sisters were happy to sit by her, observing nearly such a silence, as if in the chapel, for it seemed as if dear Mother was ever speaking heart to heart with God. She saw in every human creature a living image of her God, and, therefore, it is not strange, that she was never known to be wanting in her duty to any one.

She was never suspicious, never distrusted any one, nor would she ever allow a person to influence her to the detriment of another. She seemed never to tire repeating to the sisters to screen the childrens' defects, to remember only their good qualities, and to try to make these predominate. Sometimes, some of the sisters would complain bitterly of some child, declaring they believed him incorrigible. Mother would say: "O no, dear sister, no! He has some good quality, for Our Lord never yet made one of His creatures without good. As yet you have not found out this quality—do so, and then think of the good, and you will be able to bear with him."

On the evening previous to her death, she gave her usual admonition (it being Friday evening) on charity, and tender kindness to the children. Thus, her last words to the Community were a loving exhortation to mutual charity among the members, and a tender love for the orphan. She entreated the sisters to be patient when these dear children committed faults, and to sweetly and gently win them to their duty. After saying the last prayer, she turned, and leaning her hand on the chair, she continued to speak so earnestly on charity, that some of her sisters shed tears, and several declare they had never heard her speak so impressively before. Yet the sisters of her house were remarkable for charity and union; but this "Mother of Charity," * who was then so near her last moments, seemed all glowing, as it were, with transports of tender love for her dear sisters in Jesus Christ, and those of whom Our Lord has said: "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Time and again, had she repeated during her life: "Let us take care that our name of Sisters of Charity does not condemn us."

---

* A name given her by a little child. On seeing her go into a store, the little one in the street called out: "The Mother of Charity has gone in there."

She did not wish the sisters to be so unmindful of one another's faults as not to kindly advise one another; but, with her holy Founder, she looked upon charity and union as virtues to which all others should yield.

One of the sisters, assures me that during the twenty years she was with Mother, she never heard her say to one of the sisters; "I forbid you, or I command you." She always said: "Dear sister, I entreat you" or something to that effect. In this point, as well as in many others, she exactly imitated her holy Father, St. Vincent. Novices, as well as the young sisters, were special objects of her care. Her instructions to them were always humble, and all knew she never gave a lesson she had not first learned. Nothing but pressing duties could make her omit the doctrinal instruction on Sundays, which, she said: "Is important to the sisters, to the poor, and to the Community." After it was finished, she would let the sisters draw virtues, and would always attach great importance to the one which each drew, and say some little word about it. Once when a sister had drawn humility, she said: "Dear child, learn the practice of this virtue, and then teach it to me, for I am not humble." She went on speaking so feelingly that the novices wept.

To another young sister she said: "Dear child, if you wish to be perfect, be humble, if you wish to be very perfect, be very humble." At different times, she was heard to say: "Give the children instruction, and plenty to eat, and all will be well."

Of her own humility, of which her whole life was one continued example, what shall I say? I have been assured, that words cannot express her distress on being chosen Mother Superior. She was naturally of a retiring disposition, and grace had rendered the hidden life one of unutterable attractions to her. "She disliked anything approaching notoriety, and as she labored only for the honor and glory of God, she sought not, nor did she desire the applause of the world," says Father Madden. Grounded, deeply in humility, she believed, as we have seen, that even a novice could teach her. She carried this beautiful virtue with her whenever and wherever she entered on the duties of a new office. No one, we are sure, ever conversed with her for any length of time, without feeling convinced that she was one of the humblest persons on earth. Yet, as one of the sisters remarked to me; "Never was there more dignity joined with more profound humility. She seemed to rely neither upon her age in the

Community, and consequent long experience in the religious life, nor upon anything else; she seemed entirely lost, in a profound sense of her own insufficiency." She always took the last place, and was ever ready to be lost sight of and forgotten. The essential spirit of the Sisters of Charity is one of humility, simplicity and charity, and this first Mother was an accomplished model of these virtues during her whole religious life.

We have already repeated the admonition she received from the Right Rev. Bishop, when her term of office expired. The good mother complied with the injunction, whether we consider it in its literal sense, or in its spiritual bearing. On the 13th of December, 1849, she went to the Half-Orphan asylum, in Eleventh Street, as a private sister. The asylum was presided over by Sister Susan, who fully appreciated the virtues of Mother Elizabeth, and revered her so much, that, had she herself been less virtuous, her position would have been a painful one. When the bell rang for meals, Mother always passed down after the youngest in the house. She would never leave the Community room without permission, if only a novice were there to give it. During the time she remained in that house, she probably gave more exalted proofs

of sanctity than at any other time during her edifying life. The "Following of Christ" tells us, that he who would command others, must first learn how to obey. It was evident, the holy Mother had learned this lesson so thoroughly and perfectly, during the first years of her religious life, that thirty-five years of superiorship had not caused her to forget the minutest duty of a subject to her superior.

In 1851, the new St. Patrick's male orphan asylum, in Fifty-first Street, being completed, she was called to direct it, a post for which her long experience admirably fitted her.

St. Vincent often declared to the Sisters of Charity that: "She who lives to the Rule, lives to God;" and this on the authority of our Holy Father, Clement VIII., who often said: "Bring me a religious, who has persevered in the observance of rule during life, and I will require no other proof of sanctity, in order to proceed with the canonization of that religious." Taking these words as our criterion of judgment, how exalted an idea must we form of the sanctity of Mother Elizabeth, since her Rule was a part of herself. Had the rule been lost, it could have been devised anew from her daily conduct. She was habituated to obedience from the first sound of the bell in the morning. When

she was extremely debilitated from her "sad disease," as she called it, a sister was stationed by her bedside to wait upon her. If the sister was busied in another part of the room, Mother would rise the instant the bell sounded, so mindful was she of these striking words of St. Vincent: "The whole day depends on the morning prayer, and the prayer on the morning rising." She always arranged her room, as far as the Rule requires, before she repaired to the chapel, and yet, as far back as the sisters can remember, she was always the first to visit the Blessed Sacrament, and always found time to trim the sanctuary lamp before morning prayers. This, her extraordinary fidelity, caused her first absence from the chapel to be noticed so opportunely.

She had this truth indelibly fixed upon her mind: "That we must give an account of every moment of our time." Therefore, we find that she most carefully husbanded every moment of it. There is but one testimony in this respect concerning her; "She was never known to lose a single moment." Fearful of depriving the orphans of some portion of the time she should give to them, she would never write letters unless obliged to do so, except on Sundays and Holydays. A young sister asked her permission

ST. PATRICK'S NEW ORPHAN ASYLUM,
51st Street and Fifth Avenue.

to go to an Epiphany play at one of the mission houses. Mother gave it to her in a very kind manner, without making any comment on the request. However, it occurred to the sister that Mother never went out, unless she had some business, so returning to Mother she said: "Mother, tell me please, would you go if you were in my place?" "As you ask me, dear child," said the Mother, "I must tell you, I would not. It is true, your duty would not suffer by your absence, but never yet, since I have been a sister, have I made an unnecessary visit, and on my dying day, I do not think I shall regret it." On a day preceding the annual retreat, one year, she sent a number of the young sisters to the Mother-house quite early in the day, while she herself delayed till evening. A young sister, meeting her, expressed regret that she had not come earlier, so as to have been rested. "My dear child, it was very necessary for me to prepare for my retreat," said Mother in reply, "by a day of recollection. You are young and fervent, and not so easily distracted as I am, so I sent you this morning." After the retreat closed, she was always one of the first to return home, to re-assume the duties of her post. Except during the annual retreats, or when journeying, she was never known to pass a

night away from the mission at which she was stationed; not even at the Mother-house.

The sisters, sometimes, begged her to excuse the Community from some exercise of Rule, although they knew, from experience, that she would never consent. Her usual answer to such petitions were: "My dear sisters, it is a point of Rule, you know, and we must keep the Rule, or else give an account for not having done so." Every rule was important in her eyes.

So anxious was she to repose, free from the slightest fault against the *letter* of the Rule, that she invariably took holy water, if any one went to speak to her, after she had retired, even if she had said but one word in reply to a necessary question. She avoided all unnecessary intercourse with her family. Indeed, a number of her very near relatives did not know where she was stationed, until two or three years before her death. Captain Lytton, who is married to one of her nieces, called at the asylum about two years before she died. When she heard who it was that wished to see her, she exclaimed: "I am so sorry they have found me out!"

CHAPTER XXV.

Mother Elizabeth Comforts Home-sick Novices—Poverty of the First Foundations—Mother Elizabeth's great Joy—The Picture of the First Community.

We see, by this little volume, that Mother Elizabeth's life was spent in the pioneer days of both the Southern and the New York Communities; both of which were founded in poverty, and privation, and sustained by constant labor. When asked, by a friend, what was her first duty at Emmittsburg. "To feed the chickens," she replied. We are told, that it was her custom to carry the little weak ones in the bosom of her dress to save them from perishing in the cold.

Elizabeth suffered much, at first, from home-sickness, that malady of the soul, which, sooner or later, is sure to attack those who leave all for God. Sincere and candid with her superiors, however, they knew how she suffered; they also knew that this temptation, if courageously combated, would strengthen her still more.

It was at such a time in our Mother's experience, that the Rule was expected to arrive

from France, and the superiors, fearing the effect on Mother's delicate scrupulous conscience, sent her to the village, so that she was absent when the Rule was read for the first time to the Emmittsburg Community. They little thought what a living rule she was afterwards to become! Our Mother frequently rode on horseback alone to the village, although quite young, her beautiful face and fine figure completely hidden under a huge hood and cloak. The cloak she retained to the end of her life as a memento of her early trials.

Our Lord foresaw, what no one thought of at that time, viz.; how many home-sick hearts she would be called on in after years to comfort. And what a comfort to the weary soul, disgusted with itself for this feeling, and utterly unable to control it! What a comfort to hear Mother Elizabeth, with her sweet smile and gentle voice, whispering: "It is a good sign, dear, to be home-sick. You will persevere, and be a good sister." "After all these years," she said to a young postulant, "I remember well, how I suffered. I cried so much in the carriage, going to Emmittsburg, that I was ashamed to let anyone see my face, and went immediately to bed with a headache; no make-believe one either, as I had really made myself sick crying,

and I could not stop. Never mind, dear child, come and tell me when you feel home-sick, and I shall always help you to fight the enemy." Poor human nature is well tried at the beginning of every great work, and the foundations of the Sisters of Charity in America were no exception. The necessaries of life were so scant at first, that ground carrots served for coffee, and the Christmas dinner gloried in a shin of beef. Add to this discomfort the agony of home-sickness, and you may form some idea of the courage and heroic perseverance of our saintly Mother. Truly A. Kempis writes: "Love sweetens all labor, and makes light, all that is burdensome. When weary it is not tired, when straitened it is not constrained. He that loves runs and rejoices, where he that loves not faints and lies down." Thus when the New York Community was to be founded in similar poverty, our Lord knew where to find His faithful servant, who had been trained to the yoke, and who knew how to bear the burden of every privation. Again, she was called on to take more than her share of labors and trials of every kind, together with the heart-rending of separation from all she loved. And what dear ties must have twined themselves into the recesses of her loving nature during those years of sweet companionship with such

kindred spirits as Mother Seton, Mother Rose, and the others who formed the heroic band of first sisters at Emmittsburg! At the call of duty, however, she left all, and cheerfully stifled every emotion in order to serve God in His appointed place. Even in this life her reward was great. The Psalmist has prophetically sung: "Who maketh the barren woman to dwell in a house, the joyful mother of children." The joyful mother surely, for what joy could compare with that of seeing the success of her labor, in the objects of her care, growing up to perfect manhood, in habits of industry, integrity, morality; above all, in innocence, fitted to become faithful workers in the vineyard of this world, where God appoints a place for each and all who call upon Him! And then, what joy! what ecstasy! to assist at the adorable Sacrifice offered for the living and the dead, by the very hands that she had nurtured, cherished, often prayed over for this intention! This happiness was experienced again and again by our dear Mother, whose life is related for the edification of all who, like her, have been called to labor in the family of St. Vincent.

How utterly impossible it is for the votaries of the world, to conceive the unalloyed happiness springing up in the soul from the con-

sciousness of perfect purity of life! A life of virginity seems to forego the joys of maternity, yet this beautiful text of the Psalmist evidently foretells the joys of such as our saintly Mother. "Who maketh her to dwell in her house the joyful Mother of children." It is a part of the hundred-fold promised by our Lord to his disciples: "Everyone that hath left house or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall have a hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting." (Matt. xx–29).

The postulant, going to petition to-day at Mount St. Vincent, finds things much changed from what they were in the times of Mother Elizabeth. Now, beauteous grounds and commodious buildings, admirably suited for the development of the physical and mental qualities of the aspirant are, by the blessing of God, the property of the Community. Shrines and grottoes incite to devotion, whilst the little white crosses, clustered around the grave of dear Mother Elizabeth, tell the tale of a generation of holy souls, who have gone to meet their eternal Spouse. Such is the new home of the living and the dead of the Community.

What a contrast does it not form to the vivid picture left by a postulant, who, being received

in 1849, has left us the following account of her first Sunday in the Community.

"I arrrived," she says, "on the Monday previous, but did not notice the place much, although my bones ached from the benches without backs. On Sunday, however, my three days' retreat being over, I found myself free to look around. I went into the Community room and took a bird's eye view, saying to myself: I often heard of poverty, but I never saw such a perfect picture of it before. Here were four white-washed walls, a few benches, a flight of stairs, leading to the dormitory, and two windows. A partition, forming one side of the room, opened as folding doors into the little chapel, where there was literally nothing outside the sanctuary, but the floor; not even the benches, at that hour of the day, as the same set of benches did duty in the study-hall, Community-room, refectory, and chapel, and were carried around to the different parts of the house, as occasion required. In that bare little chapel, however, the sisters found the strength to endure 'all labors for Christ,' Who *there* had vouchsafed to take up His abode with them."

With what loving eyes our Lord must have regarded that noble band of Sisters, assembled every morning, kneeling on the bare floor, and

asking for strength to go through the day in a manner pleasing to Him! How cheerfully they struggled on forms the subject of many an anecdote. Their toilet service consisted, at that time, of a tin bowl and a pail of water, the latter almost always in need of replenishing. This, with a little mug, to hold a tooth-brush, and a small square of common soap, makes quite a contrast to the present convenient lavatory, with its tiled floor, and marble basins. And yet, even now, after all these years, during which the Community has prospered, so that there is no more need for the sisters to stay up to scrub the study-hall, when the children are in bed, as had to be done in the olden time, when there is no more rising at three o'clock, to get the washing out before Mass, even now a sister's life is such, that every one, able to work, is more or less on a constant strain, and unless the grace of God sustain and direct her, as it did the holy Mother Elizabeth, she will be found deficient in the virtues which should mark the Sister of Charity, and lacking the spirit of her first Mother Superior.

CONCLUSION.

We briefly end this sketch of our first Mother's life; but the odor of her virtues is redolent where she lived. The good work she so humbly commenced is imperishable. In her is fulfilled the prophesy: "After her shall many virgins be brought to the King." Manifold, truly, are the fruits of her labors! Whether we consider the immediate members of our Community and the many good works in operation under their care, or whether we look abroad over the countless numbers that have been led into, and encouraged in the path of virtue by those who followed in the footsteps of our Mother, and tracing all this good back to her humble, unobtrusive, constant practice of every virtue, we feel that her life must be for us a shining light to guide us, a beacon of encouragement, and a stimulus to incite constantly to renewed exertion. Fifty years have not yet gone by since the New York community opened its doors to the rich and the poor, inviting both alike to serve God, the one in giving of their substance to the needy, the other in praising their bountiful Creator, for his gifts of body, soul, and

mind. Not yet half a century, and how many souls have already gone before the throne of God to receive the reward of their fidelity in every walk of life, even amongst the ministers of foremost rank around the altars of the Church, to receive their reward, and to pray for the one by whose exertions they were led into the knowledge of the truth and of virtue!

If the Community in its members preserves the spirit of humble faithful service, if its simple Rule, and their simple lives are still the means which draw pure souls to God, are we not indebted to the example of devotion to every duty, left us by our first Mother? If the spirit of silence and recollection prevails to such an extent that strangers approaching the convent often exclaim: "It seems as if there were no one alive here," do we not owe it to the solid foundation laid by our first Mother, strengthened by her example, and perfected by abundant grace obtained through her prayers.

Although Mother Elizabeth never saw the present Mother-house, she nurtured the good seed in the hearts of her companions, and, above all, in her successors in office. Thus her life is transmitted from generation to generation, and her intercession with God is a powerful means of help, for all; for the young, just entering on

the path she so firmly trod, and for the old, who can recall her saintly life, before they were grown gray in the service of God, and who often exclaim: "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they shall praise thee forever and ever." *Psalm* 83.

The sisters, who succeeded Mother Elizabeth in office, well carried out her quiet teaching, casting their care on God, and humbly fulfilling every duty as it came in their way, leaving to others to shine in the eyes of the world and its votaries. We hope, in time, to be able to have their lives and virtues transmitted to the future of our dear Community as an edification for those who shall be called to the same great work. Of them we say:

"We miss their fond smile and their fostering care;
They are gone—but we know they are anchored at rest,
While an odor of virtue, like balm on the air,
Still lives in the places their presence had blessed."—

CONTENTS.

PAGE

EDITOR'S PREFACE, - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - iii
INTRODUCTION, - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - vii

CHAPTER I.

Introductory Remarks—Birth of Elizabeth—Her Parentage—Early Life—Conversion to the True Faith, - - - - - - - - 1

CHAPTER II.

Her First Communion—Happy Effects of a Worthy First Communion—She Resolves to Enter Religion—Arrives at St. Joseph's, - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 14

CHAPTER III.

Her Early Religious Life—Her Trials—Beautiful Advice Given Her—Short Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Community at St. Joseph's Before Her Entrance, - - - - - - - - - 19

CHAPTER IV.

Elizabeth's Trials—She is Tempted to Leave the Community—Her Sister, Susanna, Enters the Church—Elizabeth's Letter to Her Mother—Her Mother's Death—Elizabeth is made Sacristan—Letter of Father Moranvillé, - - - - - - - - - - - 31

CHAPTER V.

Rules Received from Paris—Archbishop Carroll's Letter of Approval—St. Vincent de Paul and Madam Le Gras—Elizabeth the First Novice in the United States—Services of Father Bruté to the Community—His Meditations, - - - - - - - - 43

CHAPTER VI. PAGE

The First Vows—Sister Elizabeth Assistant Mother—Letters of Father Moranvillé—Sister Elizabeth Appointed Mistress of Novices—Father Bruté's Idea of a Sister—Duties of a Sister Explained by Father Moranvillé, - - - - - - - - - - - - 57

CHAPTER VII.

Sister Elizabeth's Humility and Fervor—She is Re-elected Assistant Mother—Letters of Father Moranvillé, - - - - - - - - 73

CHAPTER VIII.

Marriage of Elizabeth's Sister—Expiration of the Term of Office of Sister Elizabeth as Assistant Mother—She still Remains Mistress of Novices—Father Moranvillé's Letter Concerning a Postulant—Sister Elizabeth sent to Philadelphia—Resemblance between Mother Seton and Sister Elizabeth, - - - - - - - 86

CHAPTER IX.

Opening of the First Mission in New York—Letter of Mother Seton to Sister Elizabeth—Death of Mother Seton, - - - - - 96

CHAPTER X.

Sister Elizabeth Arrives in Philadelphia—Her First Experience with the Orphans—Father Moranvillé Comforts her in her Trials—Death of her Brother, Edward, - - - - - - - - - 104

CHAPTER XI.

Sister Elizabeth goes to New York—Her Solicitude for the Orphans—Very Rev. Dr. Power—Death of Father Moranvillé, 118

CHAPTER XII. PAGE

Prince Street Asylum—Dr. Power—His Conference to the Sisters—Bishop Dubois Counsels a new Mother-house in New York—Sister Elizabeth again Assistant Mother—She Returns to New York—Two Orphans Study in Rome for the Priesthood—Poverty of the Asylum—Death of young Perry—Sister Elizabeth Stricken with Typhus—Her Calmness in Time of Fire—Letter of Bishop Bruté—Bishop Hughes, - - - - - 126

CHAPTER XIII.

Another Death at Propaganda—Kindness of Sister Elizabeth to Orphans—Her Confidence in their Prayers—Death of Bishop Dubois, - 147

CHAPTER XIV.

Spread of Schools and Asylums—Sister Elizabeth goes to Rochester—The Superior-General assents to the Organization of a New Mother-house in New York, and sends the Sisters his Blessing—Letter of Bishop Hughes—Action of Father Deluol and Bishop Hughes in the Formation of the New Community—Bishop Hughes and St. Vincent de Paul—Names of the Sisters who formed the New Community—Father McElroy's Opinion, 155

CHAPTER XV.

Retreat of the Community—Conferences of Bishop Hughes—His Exalted Idea of Vocation—The Necessity of Humility and Simplicity—On the Observance of Rules—On Detachment from the World—On holy Poverty—On holy Fear—On the life of a Sister, - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 168

CHAPTER XVI.

First Officers of the new Community—Sister Elizabeth Chosen Mother—Recognition by the Holy See—Opening of the Novitiate—Mount St. Vincent Established by Mother Elizabeth—Poverty of the New Community, - - - - - - - - - - - - 182

CHAPTER XVII. PAGE

The Bishop visits the new Establishment—Mother Elizabeth's daily Life at Mount St. Vincent—Happiness of the Sister's—Opening of the Academy Mount St. Vincent—Rules for Pupils, 190

CHAPTER XVIII.

First Death in the Community—Establishment of a Mission at Halifax—St. Vincent's Hospital opened—Sister Jerome Ely Elected Mother—Mother Elizabeth in charge of the New Male Orphan Asylum—Mother Elizabeth's Untiring Industry, . . 199

CHAPTER XIX.

Gentleness of Mother Elizabeth—Her Methods of Punishment—She Repairs the Orphans' Clothing—She Inculcates Love for Truth, ... 207

CHAPTER XX.

Illness of Mother Elizabeth—She is Anointed—She Recovers—She Works During her Illness—Her Letters to Master Conboy, 215.

CHAPTER XXI.

Self-Possession of Mother Elizabeth in Time of Danger—She Prepares the Meal for the Hungry Orphans—She Removes the Snow from the Roofless Rooms—Instruction of Father Hecker—Sister Magdalen Loses her Sight—Mother Elizabeth's Advice to a Novice, ... 223.

CHAPTER XXII.

Renewed Illness of Mother Elizabeth—She Amuses the Sisters during Recreation—Her Death—Grief of the Sisters and Orphans, ... 240

CHAPTER XXIII. PAGE

Funeral of Mother Elizabeth—She is buried at Mount St. Vincent—Lines of one of the Orphans—Father Madden's Tribute to Her Memory, - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 247

CHAPTER XXIV.

A Summary of the Virtues of the Good Mother Elizabeth—Her Eminent Spirit of the Interior Life, evinced by her Recollection, and Spirit of Prayer—Her Humility, Simplicity, Charity, and Fidelity to Rule, - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 253

CHAPTER XXV.

Mother Elizabeth Comforts Home-sick Novices—Poverty of the First Foundations—Mother Elizabeth's great Joy—The Picture of the First Community, - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 263

CONCLUSION, - 270

CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL UNION
BX4705.B78A1 C001
LIFE OF MOTHER ELIZABETH BOYLE NEW YORK

3 0311 00053 7204

BX
4705
.B78A1 A.M.M.G

AUTHOR
LIFE OF MOTHER ELIZABETH
BOYLE

3 0311 00053